A RETREAT
UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
ST TERESA

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A RETREAT UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF ST TERESA

A RETREAT

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF SAINT TERESA

DRAWN FROM HER WRITINGS

BY

MOTHER MARY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
CARMELITE NUN

WITH A LETTER OF COMMENDATION FROM

HIS EXCELLENCY CARDINAL MERCIER

Archbishop of Malines

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LETTER OF COMMENDATION

FROM

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MERCIER

Archbishop of Malines

FOR THE FRENCH EDITION

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, MALINES,
Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
July 16, 1924.

REVEREND AND DEAR MOTHER SUBPRIORESS,

Inspired by a daughter's love for your holy Foundress, you have written a "Retreat" in order that prayerful souls may there find nourishment from her teaching and strength from her example.

Is not this the twofold grace sought by the Church on the Saint's feast, when praying that the faithful who rejoice in the festival may live by St Teresa's teaching and heavenly doctrine and be strengthened in charity by means of her fervent devotion: "Ita caelestis ejus doctrinae pabulo nutriantur et piae devotionis erudiantur affectu"?

Amid my many daily tasks, I have only been able to glance at your precious manuscript, but I know with what ardour and solicitude you have, for many years, studied the writings of the wonderful woman who was your Foundress, and how deliberately you have weighed each word of the original before transposing it into the grace and clarity of your mother-tongue.

The public can place complete confidence in your publication.

I hope your book will find a welcome in France and Belgium and will achieve complete success.

I pray God to bless the brave Carmelite nun who has made herself an exile in order to render greater service to the heathen and has added to the penitential, laborious labours of her mission, the apostolate of the pen.

I also beg God to bless the numerous readers who will perform the exercises of the " Retreat under the Guidance of St Teresa."

Accept with my kind remembrances, Reverend Mother Subprioress, the assurance of my fatherly affection in our Lord.

✠ D. J. CARD. MERCIER.
Archbishop of Maline s.

The Reverend Mother Marie du Saint Sacrement,
Subprioress of the Carmelite Convent of Mangalore.
(South India).

INTRODUCTION

This Retreat Book, taken from St Teresa's Writings, is being republished by the Mother Superior of Christ the King Carmel Convent, Bangalore, in commemoration of the Silver Jubilee of its establishment. St Teresa was a remarkable personality. Her life and work and her writings have enriched ascetic literature and exercised a profound influence on monastic life and rule for over three centuries.

St Teresa occupies a unique position among the writers of mystical theology. These meditations, her reflections, reveal her deep insight into things spiritual, and her personal relation with the Divine Master and with her subjects and others with whom she came into contact.

St Teresa lays down the principles, which lead to the practice of humility, obedience, self-denial and solid interior life. She was a great reformer of monastic life, in spite of violent opposition. She restored the austerities of the primitive rule of Carmel. She was well-known for the extraordinary favours God bestowed upon her and for her visions and revelations. Her deep faith and indomitable courage, her spirit of sacrifice, ardent love for God and her personal experiences in spiritual life, are exemplified in every page of the book. The thought of eternal life, following death, made a tremendous impression upon her mind and imagination and taught her to despise earthly things. At the age of 7, she evinced great interest in reading the lives of the Saints and other pious books along with her brother, Rodrigo, three years older than Teresa.

Evading the vigilance of their mother and elder sister, Maria, Teresa and her brother, set out for the undiscovered

country of the Moors, begging their way for the love of God, that they might lay down their lives for Christ and obtain heavenly bliss. They hurried along the road when suddenly a man on horseback met them. It was their uncle, who took them back to their house, where everyone was plunged in deep sorrow at their sudden disappearance.

It is true, later on, Teresa read many profane books and romances and loved fine clothes and perfumes, but after joining the Carmelite monastery, she dedicated herself entirely to growth in supernatural perfection.

The book will prove of immense practical advantage to all who desire ardently and endeavour earnestly to make progress in spiritual perfection. The maxims of the spiritual life explained so clearly and simply afford solid ground for meditation, stimulate fervour and inspire prompt and generous effort, particularly to religious institutes.

✠ THOMAS POTHACAMURY,
Archbishop of Bangalore

BANGALORE
June 29, 1957

PROLOGUE

THERE are many people who regularly spend a week, or perhaps more, every year in making a retreat. Withdrawn from the world for the time being, they require the help in this work, for their souls, of a book which will give them, in the form of meditations, solid ground for their reflections, stimulate their fervour and inspire generous resolutions. No doubt there are many volumes that suit such needs, but tastes differ, and it is an advantage to use a fresh book from year to year.

Souls aspiring to divine union will always feel a special attraction for St Teresa: so that both priests and religious of active and contemplative Orders, as well as the faithful living in the world, will probably welcome for their retreat a series of meditations drawn from the writings of the virgin Saint of Avila. If the work contains any merit, it is that the Saint alone speaks in it. The task would have been easier if the compiler had connected or commented upon the subjects. This has not been done. Consequently, priests, religious, or Christians living in the world will find in *A Retreat under the Guidance of St Teresa* a jewel of the purest gold without alloy. Those who wish to verify the quotations composing the Retreat, will be enabled to do so by the references given in foot-notes throughout the book.

It is St Teresa alone, we said, that will be listened to, discussing the highest and most practical subjects with the decided teaching, the delicacy of insight and the burning zeal that distinguish her writings. But, besides, our Saint speaks from experience. When she describes hell, it is after having been mysteriously transported there: if she tries to make us understand something of what heaven is, she has been ravished there in spirit several times: when she pictures the beauty of our Lord's sacred Humanity, it is after having seen it in contemplation: and it is from the marvellous proofs afforded her of the divine tenderness and mercy that she teaches us about it.

But what are we to think of St Teresa's frequent expressions of sorrow for "her sins," for "her grievous faults," for "her evil life"?

There is no doubt that for some years she strove to combine the life of the cloister with a certain amount of worldly pleasure, that, influenced by the attraction exercised by her intellect, she closed her ears to her heavenly Bridegroom's call to a close union with him, and that, on more than one occasion, she exposed herself to the risk of committing sin. These concessions to the spirit of the world were serious for a soul enjoying such privileges as hers: they interfered with God's plan for her and aroused the divine jealousy, the more on account of the special love shown to her. Therefore it is not surprising that, when after having been raised to a sublime degree of union with God and being inundated with celestial light, Teresa should have told us that her faults—venial as they were—ought to be mourned with tears of blood. Most of her biographers have understood this. In her confessions of guilt they have detected the humility characteristic of God's faithful friends and have believed that she never committed a mortal sin. The Church, in her Bull of Canonization, declares that "the Virgin Teresa never stained the angelic purity of her soul and body."[1]

With this understanding, we do not fear to say that our Saint acted wrongly at one period of her life. There seems nothing to gain by representing the Saints as incapable of sin. On the contrary, it is an advantage to realize that our loving, merciful Redeemer not only pardons, but bestows his most tender intimacy on loving, repentant souls, whether, like Magdalene, they sorrow for grave sins, or, like Teresa, feel contrition for their unfaithfulness to the wooing of divine Love. What a joy for those who plod along the dusty highway of this world to exclaim, with our great Saint: "Blessed he who, when he pleases, draws good out of our very faults!"

The Retreat gives a course of four meditations a day for ten days, that being the plan followed by St Teresa's daughters. Those who make a Retreat of eight days only will find, with the eight Supplementary Meditations at the end of the book, material for two Retreats: two lists of subjects for meditation will give the plan for these.

[1] *Introduction to the Life of St Teresa* (*Œuvres completes*, t. i, 1907.)

The incidents from St Teresa's life at the end of the meditation would be suitable for spiritual reading each day. A large number of these examples are drawn from the depositions for the Saint's beatification and have been translated from the Spanish.

May all Christians who come in contact with Teresa's heart burn with new love for our adorable Redeemer and labour strenuously to reform and perfect their life according to the teaching of his Gospel. May they ever follow him more closely in the way opened to them by his words, example and sufferings.

Carmel of Mangalore (British India),
on the 15th of October, 1928,
Feast of St Teresa.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

TRUE perfection, declares St Teresa, lies in the love of God and the love of our neighbour. The more perfectly we observe these two commandments, the more perfect we are.

To grow and become perfect in this twofold love is the object of the *Retreat under the Guidance of St Teresa.*

The first three days are devoted to the purgative life. The conscience is to be examined, cleansed from the faults that stain it, and freed from whatever hinders the reign of divine love.

But first the soul must look up to God, infinite Perfection, eternal Light, *supreme Truth*, who surpasses all our conceptions, yet calls for the consecration of our minds and the love of our hearts. Then, turning its gaze inward, by the light of God the soul perceives the *dignity it possesses,* being by nature and grace the reflection of uncreated Light. Drawn by love from nothingness, it is the object of its Creator's good-will, the *dwelling-place of the adorable Trinity*. Yet, into many of these beautiful creatures of God, *mortal sin* has entered, plunging the luminous image of their Maker into an abyss of darkness and misery. This is the FIRST DAY of the Retreat.

St Teresa then places before our thoughts *hell*, the just punishment of the soul that has become the enemy of God and the slave of Satan ; the *judgement*, which will reveal all the baseness and offences committed against God, and even *in* God, who contains within himself the world and all its inhabitants ; *death*, the sinner's terror and the consolation of the faithful, righteous soul. She will show us how detachment from creatures is a means of avoiding sin, source of all evil. This is the SECOND DAY devoted to the purgative life.

On the THIRD DAY, the great Saint will strive to inspire us with horror for *venial sin* committed with advertence and will explain the benefits of *peace of soul*, with the means of obtaining it : she will endeavour to root in our souls the *fear of God* : and will encourage us in the combats of this life. Lastly, she will tell us of the infinite *mercy of God*

and how the soul still feels *sorrow for sin* after leaving the purgative for the illuminative way, and even when it has entered the unitive state.

When it starts on the illuminative way, the soul begins with a strong attachment for *Jesus Christ, its divine King.* It makes a *courageous resolution* to follow in his footsteps, without ever looking back. It studies its heavenly model, *the divine Word, made man for us,* and strives to march beneath his standard and to dissuade others from enrolling themselves in the *ranks of Satan.* This is the FOURTH DAY of the Retreat.

On the FIFTH DAY, the soul, led by St Teresa, asks our Lord for the living water of which he spoke to the *Samaritan woman,* and resolves to practise *mental prayer,* regardless of what *aridity* it may endure, being well aware that prayer is *the source of all spiritual good.*

On the SIXTH DAY, the soul, basing itself on the firm foundation of *humility,* contemplates Jesus in his *Agony,* suffering from the weakness and repugnances of human nature. It follows him through the phases of his Passion, sees him *scourged* and *crowned with thorns,* and resolves to embrace suffering and *mortification* for love of him.

On the SEVENTH DAY, having before it *his cross and crucifixion,* the soul is led to follow its Master's example by the *forgiveness of injuries, obedience,* and *detachment from honour.*

On the EIGHTH DAY, St Teresa bids us contemplate Jesus in the glory of his *Resurrection*: she inflames our *zeal for the salvation of souls,* and teaches us to draw divine life from its source by means of *Holy Communion*: she show us *heaven,* where our sole occupation will be to love him who so loved us.

On the NINTH DAY of the Retreat we enter fully into the unitive way. Henceforth St Teresa strives by every means to kindle in us the fire of charity.

The first meditation for this day treats entirely of *divine Love.* The Saint explains to us its character and the means of obtaining it, showing us how it brings with it every good. She then sets forth the *generous desires* of the soul which truly loves God.

Then she passes on to *love for our neighbour*, which cannot be separated from love for God and is of the utmost importance. She proves that *exterior works*, inspired by love for others, help, instead of hindering, spiritual progress.

The TENTH DAY commences by a meditation on *love for the adorable Person of our Lord*, the centre of the tenderest affection of her heart. She incites us to place our *confidence* in him who, a man like ourselves, is not astonished at human weakness. She then reveals to us a means by which all of us can certainly attain to divine union: that is, complete *conformity to the will of God.* She shows how souls united to God find their beatitude in this world by helping the crucified Saviour, by accompanying him in the *way of the cross.* This ends the Retreat.

It is well to recite daily with St Teresa the prayer she composed to obtain love for God and for our neighbour. A faithful soul will, it is believed, gain by the fervent recitation of that Prayer an increase of light and ardour, as it follows the course of the Retreat.

Prayer of St Teresa to ask for Love of God and our Neighbour

O my God! Since thou art charity and love itself, perfect this virtue in me, that its ardour may consume all the dregs of self-love. May I hold thee as my sole Treasure and my one glory, far dearer than all creatures. Make me love myself in thee, for thee and by thee, and my neighbour for thy sake, in the same manner, bearing his burdens, as I wish him to bear mine. Let me care for naught beside thee, except in so far as it will lead me to thee. May I rejoice in thy perfect love for me, and in the eternal love borne for thee by the angels and Saints in heaven, where the veil is lifted and they see thee face to face. Grant that I may exult because the Just, who know thee by faith in this life, count thee as their highest good, the centre and the end of their actions. I long that sinners and the imperfect may do the same, and with the aid of thy grace I crave to help them.

Teresa of Jesus.

Ever since, and even before, the publication of the French edition of "The Retreat," we have been repeatedly asked to give an English version of the work. Consequently we have availed ourselves of the kind and competent revision of the book by Dame Beatrice, a Benedictine nun of Stanbrook Abbey, from whose excellent translation of *The Way of Perfection, The Foundations, The Interior Castle*, *The Exclamations* and *Maxims* our quotations have been taken. The passages from *The Life* and *The Relations* are from the English version of David Lewis.

A RETREAT
UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
SAINT TERESA

ADVICE FOR THE EVE OF THE RETREAT

A WHOLE lifetime is short, and, sometimes, very short indeed.[1] How do we know but that ours may not be so short as to end in an hour, or even in a moment, after we have determined to give ourselves entirely to God? It is quite possible, for we cannot depend on anything that passes away, much less on life, on which we must not reckon for a single day. Who, thinking each hour to be his last, would not spend it in labour?

There are people who, still very worldly, yet have some desire to do right, and at times, though rarely, commend themselves to God's care.[2] They think about their souls every now and then; although very busy, they pray a few times a month, with minds generally filled with a thousand other matters, for "where their treasure is, there is their heart also."[3] Still, occasionally they cast aside these cares; it is a great boon for them to realize to some extent the state of their souls, and to see that they will never reach the goal by the road they are following.

It is most important [during the Retreat][4] to withdraw from all unnecessary cares and business, as far as compatible with the duties of one's state of life.

As regards religious souls, does it not happen sometimes that, after having escaped from all worldly impediments, and having entered much further into the more secret spiritual mansions, they return, by their own fault, to all this turmoil? Undoubtedly, through their sins, many

[1] *Way of Perfection,* ch. xii.
[2] *Interior Castle,* 1st Mansion, ch. i.
[3] *Ubi enim est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum* (Matt. v 21).
[4] Ch. ii.

people on whom God has bestowed great graces, culpably relapse into their wretched state. In these convents we are free from these exterior evils; please God our minds may be as free from them, and may he deliver us from the interior ones!

At any time, religious souls [but especially during the Retreat], do not trouble yourselves with cares which do not concern you. You must notice that the struggle with the demons continues through nearly all the states of spiritual life. We must be keenly on the watch against the devil's arts, lest he deceives us in the form of an angel of light. He creeps in gradually, in numberless ways, and does us much harm, though we do not discover it until too late.

Oh, human blindness![1] When, oh when shall the dust be taken from our eyes? Although we think it insufficient to blind us, yet I see some little motes or grains of dust, which, if left to spread, will suffice to harm us greatly. At least, for the love of God, my sisters, let these faults convince us of our misery, that they may serve to clear our sight as did the clay the eyes of the blind man who was cured by our Spouse.[2] In his name I beg those who received choicest favours[3] not to rest content with merely receiving them, but to remember that "he who owes much has much to pay."[4]

It is most desirable that the captains of the castle, or city, of Christ—that is, the preachers and theologians—be proficient in the way of our Lord.[5] Since most of them are religious, it is necessary that they may advance in perfection and follow their vocation most perfectly . . . . They are not withdrawn from all earthly cares, from occasions of sin and from the society of the world. Indeed, it would be less fitting for them now than ever, for they have to strengthen the weak and to encourage the timid. What a state soldiers would get into without their captains! These defenders of the Church must live amongst men and associate with them; they must frequent the court, and even, at times, conform outwardly to its customs.

[1] VIth Mansion, ch. iv. [2] Joan. ix. 6. [3] VIth Mansion, ch. v.
[4] *Cui multum datum est, multum quaeretur ab eo* (Luc. xii. 48).
[5] *Way of Perfection*, ch. iii.

Do you think that it is easy to keep friends with the world, to live in it, to transact worldly business, and, as I said, to conform to its usages, and yet, in one's heart, to remain a stranger and enemy of this same world, like an exile; in short, not to be men, but to be angels? Unless they are all this, they do not deserve the name of captains, and may our Lord prevent them ever leaving their cells, for they will do more harm than good. This is no time for defects to appear in the teachers, who, unless they be forearmed by knowing the need of spurning all earthly things beneath their feet, detached from all things transitory, and wholly devoted to what is eternal, are bound to manifest their imperfections, strive as they may to hide them. For are they not dealing with the world? Do not imagine that it will pardon or fail to observe their shortcomings. Much that is good may pass unnoticed, or even perhaps be considered evil, but no fault or imperfection will ever escape criticism.

God grant that among very learned theologians and religious there may be many with the qualifications I describe; and that our Lord may perfect those who are less fitted, for one who is perfect can do more than many who are imperfect.

O souls, you who have begun to pray, and you who possess the true faith, what can you be in search of even in this life, let alone that which is for ever, that is comparable to the least God grants the soul that loves him?[1] Consider, and it is true, that God gives himself to those who give up everything for him. By "giving up everything" I do not necessarily mean entering religion, for there may be obstacles preventing this, and in every state perfect souls may be detached and humble.[2]

In short, Christian souls, do not build towers without a foundation.[3] But your foundation must not consist of prayer and contemplation alone; you must needs acquire the virtues and practise them.

Forward, then! hasten over your work.[4] Let us renounce

[1] *Life*, ch. xxvii. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xii.
[3] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iv.
[4] Vth Mansion, ch. ii.

self-love and self-will, care for nothing earthly, do penance, pray, mortify ourselves, be obedient, and perform all the other good works of which you know. Then you will see God and be immersed in his greatness; I mean in the manner he manifests himself to the souls raised to union.[1] If we hope to enjoy this favour, even during our mortal life, what are we doing? Why do we delay? What can repay the loss of a moment in searching for this Lord, like the Bride of the Canticles, through the streets and the squares? Oh, what a mockery is everything in this world that does not lead towards and help us to attain to this state! Even though all the earthly pleasures, riches and happiness that can be imagined could last for eternity, they would be disappointing and base contrasted with the treasures which are to be enjoyed for ever; and yet even *these* are nothing compared with the possession for our own of the Lord of all treasures in heaven and earth.

From the beginning [of the Retreat][2] we should strive to be cheerful and unconstrained. We must also have great confidence; because it is very necessary for us not to contract our desires, but to put our trust in God, for if we do violence to ourselves, by little and little, we shall, though not at once, reach that height which many Saints by his grace have reached. If they had never resolved to desire, and had never by little and little acted upon that resolve, they never could have ascended to so high a state. His Majesty seeks and loves courageous souls; but they must be humble in their way and have no confidence in themselves.

These first resolutions are a great matter, although it is necessary in the beginning that we should be very reserved, controlled by discretion and the authority of a director; but we must take care that he be one who does not teach to crawl like toads, nor one who may be satisfied when the soul shows itself fit only to catch lizards. But, for our sins, so few and so rare are they whose discretion in that matter is not excessive. That, I believe, is reason enough why those who begin do not attain more quickly to great perfection; for our Lord never fails us, and it is not his fault, the fault and the wretchedness of this being all our own.

[1] VIth Mansion, ch. iv. [2] *Life*, ch. xiii.

FIRST DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

GOD THE SUPREME TRUTH

PRELUDE.—God is sometimes pleased,[1] while a person is engaged in prayer, and is in perfect possession of her senses, to suspend them and to discover sublime mysteries to her, which she appears to see within God himself. . . . Short as the time lasts, yet, in a manner impossible to describe, God also manifests that in him there is a verity which makes all truth in creatures seem obscure. He convinces the soul that he alone is that truth that cannot lie, thus demonstrating the meaning of David's words in the Psalm, "Every man is a liar,"[2] which could never be thus realized by any other means, however often we might hear that God is truth infallible. As I recall Pilate and how he besought our Lord in his Passion to tell him, "What is truth?"[3], I realize how little mortals know of that sublime veracity.

FIRST POINT

One day, in prayer,[4] the sweetness of which was so great that, knowing how unworthy I was of so great a blessing, I began to think how much I had deserved to be in that place which I had seen prepared for me in hell—for I never forget the way I saw myself there—as I was thinking of this, my soul began to be more and more on fire, and I was carried away in spirit in a way I cannot describe. It seemed to me as if I had been absorbed in and filled with that grandeur of God which, on another occasion, I had felt. In that majesty it was given me to understand one truth, which is the fulness of all truth, but I cannot tell how, for I saw nothing. It was said to me, I saw not by whom, but I knew well enough it was the truth itself: *This I am doing to thee*

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. x.
[2] *Omnis homo mendax* (Ps. cxv II).
[3] *Quid est veritas?* (Joan. xviii 38).
[4] *Life, ch. xl.*

is not a slight matter; it is one of those things for which thou owest me much; for all the evil in the world comes from ignorance of the truths of the holy Writings in their clear simplicity, of which not one iota shall pass away.

I thought that I had always believed this and that all the faithful also believed it. Then he said: *Ah, my daughter, they are few who love me in truth; for if men loved me, I should not hide my secrets from them. Knowest thou what it is to love me in truth? It is to admit everything to be a lie which is not pleasing to me. Now thou dost not understand it, but thou shalt understand it clearly hereafter, by the profit it will be to thy soul.*

Our Lord be praised, so I found it; for after this vision I look upon everything which does not tend to the service of God as vanity and lies. I cannot tell how much I am convinced of this, nor how sorry I am for those whom I see living in darkness, not knowing the truth. I derived other great blessings from this, some of which I will here speak of, others I cannot describe. Our Lord at the same time uttered a word of exceeding graciousness. I know not how it was done, for I saw nothing, but I was filled, in a way which also I cannot describe, with exceeding strength and earnestness of purpose to observe with all my might everything contained in the divine Writings. I thought that I could rise above every possible hindrance put in my way.

Second Point

Of this divine truth, which was put before me I know not how, there remains imprinted within me a truth—I cannot give it a name—which fills me with a new reverence for God; it gives me a notion of his majesty and power in a way which I cannot explain. I can understand that it is something very high. I had a very great desire never to speak of anything but of these deep truths which far surpass all that is spoken of here in the world, and so the living in it began to be painful to me.

The vision left in me great tenderness, joy and humility. It seemed to me, though I knew not how, that our Lord now gave me great things; and I had no suspicion whatever

of any illusion. I saw nothing; but I understood how great a blessing it is to make no account of anything which does not lead us nearer unto God. I also understood what it is for a soul to be walking in the truth, in the presence of Truth itself. What I understood is this: that our Lord gave me to understand that he himself is the very Truth.

All that I am speaking of I learnt at times by means of words uttered; at other times I learnt some things without the help of words, and that more clearly than those other things which were told me in words. I understood exceedingly deep truths concerning the Truth, more than I could have done through the teaching of many learned men. It seems to me that learned men never could have thus impressed upon me, nor so clearly explained to me, the vanity of this world.

The Truth of which I am speaking, and which I was given to see, is Truth itself, in itself. It has neither beginning nor end. All other truths depend on this Truth, as all other loves depend on this love, and all other grandeurs on this grandeur. I understood it all, notwithstanding that my words are obscure in comparison with that clearness with which it pleased our Lord to show it to me. What, think you, must be the power of his majesty, seeing that in so short a time it leaves so great a blessing and such an impression on the soul?

Third Point

Let us learn from this, Christians, that if we would bear any resemblance to our God, we must strive to walk ever in the truth. I do not merely mean that we should not tell falsehoods—thank God, I see that in these convents one is most careful never to do so on any account—but I desire that, as far as possible, we should act with perfect truth before God and men, and above all that we should not wish to be thought better than we are; that in all our deeds we should ascribe to God what is his and attribute what is ours to ourselves, and that we should seek for verity in all things. Thus we shall care little for this world, which is but deception and falsehood, and therefore cannot last. God grant,

Christians, that we may have the grace never to lose self-knowledge![1]

If, for the love of God, we hated honours, possessions and pleasures, and embraced the cross, and set about his service in earnest, Satan would fly away before such realities, as from the plague.[2] He is the friend of lies and a lie himself.[3] He will have nothing to do with those who walk in the truth.

Colloquy

O Grandeur! Majesty of mine![4] What is it thou art doing, O my Lord Almighty! Consider who it is to whom thou givest blessings so great! Dost thou not remember that this my soul has been an abyss of lies and a sea of vanities, and all through my fault? Though thou hadst given me a natural hatred of lying, yet I did involve myself in many lying ways. How is this, O my God? How can it be that mercies and graces so great should fall to the lot of one who has so ill-deserved them at thy hands? O my soul! when will that blessed day arrive in which, absorbed in the infinite ocean of supreme Truth, thou wilt no longer possess the power nor wish to sin, being freed from all misery, and united to the life of thy God?

Resolution

Never say anything but what is perfectly true. Raise one's desires to the Truth—that is, God himself.

READING

St Teresa's Love for Truth

"Our holy Mother," declared Mother Isabel of St Dominic in the Process for the Beatification, "loved truth and

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. x.
[2] *Life*, ch. xxv.
[3] *Mendax est et pater ejus* (Joan. viii 44).
[4] *Exclamations*, xvi.

Christian simplicity exceedingly. I often heard her speak on this subject with great energy, impressing on the minds of the sisters the love of perfect truth. If she noticed the slightest deceit in their words, she would correct them sharply.

"When anyone from outside questioned her about the private affairs of the convent, she used to reply with the utmost simplicity and sincerity. If by chance one of the sisters begged her not to reveal what was passing in the convent, she would answer that truth never harmed anyone and that nothing was to be feared from dealing sincerely. I saw and experienced that the holy Mother was in a high degree truthful, as I hold it for certain that she was. (Process of Avila.)

"She loved truth so much," deposed the venerable Mother Ann of Jesus, "that if one of us jokingly said what was not true she would blame her, saying that a person who failed in that point would never reach perfection.

"When giving an account to her superiors or others of what passed among us, she used the very same words with which we had told it, without changing a syllable. She used to assure us that no cause, whatever its difficulties, ever suffered by strict adherence to truth. And, in fact, she always succeeded in a perfect manner.

"She wished to see such frankness in everything, particularly in conversation. She could not bear cunningness, and if she noticed any trace of it in a person who asked to be received into the Order, she was greatly displeased and used to say: 'Such an artful person is not fit for us. I would rather choose more candid souls.'

"Her confessions were so sincere as to surprise her confessors, especially the more learned among them." (Inform. of Salamanca.)

"Our holy Mother loved truth exceedingly," declared Mother Mary of St Francis. "When one of us was relating anything she would warn us, 'Take care not to say one thing for another.' Once she was told that a novice had committed a fault and denied it. She declared she would take the habit from her, 'because,' she said, 'a person audacious enough to tell a lie knowingly is not fit for my Order.' The case having been investigated, it became evi-

dent that it was but a misunderstanding. From that day she felt a great affection for that novice, because she knew her to be truthful." (Inform. of Alba.)

Father Ribera says: "She hated all kinds of deceit and duplicity. She spoke to everyone with respect and deference. Towards people of rank she behaved with great natural dignity, as if she were equal to them. She would tell them all she thought she ought to say, even pointed out their faults, and if she believed she ought to differ with them she did so courageously and with very little effort. This happened several times.

"She spoke freely and graciously, in a cheerful and affectionate manner to all, without constraint and with a holy, sweet liberty, so that people acquainted with her interior life were amazed that a person of such high prayer and familiar intercourse with God could deal with men with such ease and simplicity." (Part iv, ch. i and xxi.)

SECOND MEDITATION

DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL

PRELUDE.—I was once recollected in that companionship which I ever have in my soul.[1] As I stood amazed to see His Majesty in a thing so vile, I heard: "It is not vile, my child, for it is made in my image," I also learnt something of the reason why God delights in souls more than in any other creatures. It is so subtile that, though the understanding quickly comprehended, I cannot tell it.

FIRST POINT

If we reflect, Christians,[2] we shall see that the soul of the just man is but a paradise, in which, God tells us, he takes his delight.[3] What, do you imagine, must that dwelling be in which a King so mighty, so wise and so pure, containing in himself all good, can delight to rest? Nothing can be compared to the great beauty and capabilities of a soul; however keen our intellects may be, they are as unable to comprehend them as to comprehend God, for, as he has told us, he created us in his own image and likeness.[4]

As this is so, we need not tire ourselves by trying to realize all the beauty of this castle, although, being his creature, there is all the difference between the soul and God that there is between the creature and the Creator; the fact that it is made in God's image teaches us how great are its dignity and loveliness. It is no small misfortune and disgrace that, through our own fault, we neither understand our nature nor our origin. Would it not be gross ignorance, Christians, if, when a man was questioned about his name, or country, or parents, he could not answer? Stupid as this would be, it is unspeakbly more foolish to care to learn nothing of our nature, except that we possess bodies, and only to realize vaguely that we have souls because people say so and it is a

[1] *Relations,* ix. [2] *Interior Castle,* Ist Mansion, ch. i.
[3] *Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum* (Prov. viii 31).
[4] Gen. i 26: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.*

doctrine of faith. Rarely do we reflect upon what gifts our souls may possess, who dwells within them, or how extremely precious they are. Therefore we do little to preserve their beauty; all our care is concentrated on our bodies, which are but the coarse setting of the diamond, or the outer walls of the castle.

Second Point

We are far from esteeming highly enough the soul in which God so delights. Each of us possesses a soul, but we do not realize its value as made in the image of God, therefore we fail to understand the great secrets it contains. . . . It is important, Christians, that we should not fancy the soul to be in darkness. As we are accustomed to believe there is no light but that which is exterior, we imagine that the soul is wrapped in obscurity.[1] You must not think of the soul as insignificant and petty, but as an interior world, containing a number of beautiful mansions, as indeed it should, since in the centre of the soul there is a mansion reserved for God himself.

Let us think of the soul as resembling a castle,[2] formed of a single diamond or a very transparent crystal and containing many rooms, of which some are above, some below, others at the side: in the centre, in the very midst of them all, is the principal chamber, in which God and the soul hold their most secret intercourse. Think over this comparison very carefully; God grant it may enlighten you about the different kinds of graces he is pleased to bestow upon the soul. No one can know all about them, much less a person so ignorant as I am. The knowledge that such things are possible will console you greatly should our Lord ever grant you any of these favours; people themselves deprived of them can then at least praise him for his great goodness in bestowing them on others. The thought of heaven and the happiness of the Saints does us no harm, but cheers and urges us to win this joy for ourselves; nor will it injure us to know that during this exile God can communicate

[1] VIIth Mansion, ch. i. [2] 1st Mansion, ch. i.

himself to us, loathsome worms; it will rather make us love him for such immense goodness and infinite mercy.

I feel sure that vexation at thinking that during our life on earth God can bestow these graces on the souls of others shows a want of humility and charity for one's neighbour, for why should we not feel glad at a brother's receiving divine favours, which do not deprive us of our own share?[1] Should we not rather rejoice at His Majesty's thus manifesting his greatness wherever he chooses? Sometimes our Lord acts thus solely for the sake of showing his power, as he declared when the Apostles questioned whether the blind man whom he cured had been suffering for his own or his parents' sins.[2] God does not bestow this favour on certain souls because they are more holy than others who do not receive them, but to manifest his greatness, as in the case of St Paul and St Mary Magdalene, and that we may glorify him in his creatures.

Third Point

Now let us return to our beautiful and charming castle and discover how to enter it. This appears incongruous: if this castle is the soul, clearly no one can have to enter it, for it is the person himself; one might as well tell someone to go into a room he is already in! There are, however, very different ways of being in this castle; many souls live in the courtyard of the building, where the sentinels stand, neither caring to enter further, nor to know who dwells in that most delightful place, what is in it and what rooms it contains.

There are souls so infirm and accustomed to think of nothing but earthly matters, that there seems no cure for them. It appears impossible for them to retire into their own hearts. Though these souls are by their nature so richly endowed, capable of communion even with God himself, yet their case seems hopeless. . . . Let us speak no more of those crippled souls, who are in a most miserable and dangerous state, unless our Lord bids them rise, as he

[1] *Interior Castle*, 1st Mansion, ch. i. [2] Joan. ix.

did the palsied man who had waited more than thirty years at the pool of Bethsaida.[1] We will now think of the others who at last enter the precincts of the castle.

How wonderful it is that he, who by his immensity could fill a thousand worlds, should enclose himself within so narrow a compass![2] If we took care to remember what Guest we have within us, I think it would be impossible for us to give ourselves up so much to worldly vanities and cares, for we should see how vile they are in comparison with the riches within us. I took a long time to realize it. Although I knew that I possessed a soul, yet I did not appreciate its value, nor remember who dwelt within it, because I had blinded my eyes with the vanities of this life. I think that, had I understood then as I do now that so great a King resided in the little palace of my soul, I should not have left him alone so often, but should have stayed with him sometimes, and not have kept his dwelling-place in such disorder.

Colloquy

O my soul, it is time to cease seeking another home abroad, thine own being full of riches that thou canst enjoy at will.[3] Besides, it is not everyone who, like thyself, possesses all he needs within his own dwelling, and above all such a Host, who will give thee all thou canst desire, unless, like the prodigal son, thou choosest to go astray and feed with the swine.

Resolution

Let us remember how our souls are by their nature richly endowed, capable of communion even with God himself.[4]

[1] Joan. v 5.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvii.
[3] *Interior Castle*, Ist Mansion.
[4] Ist Mansion, ch. i.

READING

Knowledge imparted to St Teresa of the Beauty of the Soul

"This holy Mother desired to see the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, a thing greatly to be coveted both for the sake of seeing and of possessing it. While this desire lasted, she was commended to write a treatise on prayer, of which she had much personal experience. On the eve of the Blessed Trinity, while considering what subject to choose for this treatise, God, who disposes everything in due season, fulfilled her wish and furnished her a suitable subject. He showed her a most beautiful globe of crystal, in the shape of a castle, with seven rooms. The seventh, situated in the centre, being occupied by the King of Glory, resplendent with the most exquisite brilliancy, which shone through and adorned the remaining rooms. The nearer these lay to the centre, the more did they partake of that wondrous light. It did not, however, penetrate beyond the crystal, for everything around about was a mass of darkness and impurity, full of toads and vipers and other venomous animals.

"She was still admiring this beauty which by the grace of God dwells in the soul, when lo! the light suddenly disappeared, and the crystal, wherein the King of Glory was still residing, became opaque and as dark as coal, emitting an intolerable odour; the venomous animals, formerly held in check outside, obtained admittance into the castle. The holy Mother wished that everyone should behold this vision, for she thought that no one having seen the beauty and splendour of grace, which is forfeited by sin and replaced by such repulsive misery, would ever dare to offend God.

"She told me this vision on the same day, for in this, as well as in other things, she was so communicative that on the following morning she said to me: 'How I forgot myself yesterday! I cannot think how it could have happened. Those high aspirations of mine and the affection I have for you must have caused me to go beyond

all reasonable limits.' God grant I may have derived profit therefrom. I promised her to say nothing about it during her lifetime, but since her death I should like to make it known to all men. From this vision she learnt four important matters.

"First she came to understand this axiom, which in this form she had never heard of in her life, that God is present in all things by his essence, presence and power. As she was deeply humble and submissive and obedient to the doctrine of the Church and the teaching of the learned ministers of God, she never rested until her revelations had been approved of by her superiors and by theologians, and were proved to be conformable to Holy Scripture. She went so far as to say that if all the angels of heaven said one thing, and her superiors another, though she could not doubt that the former were truly angels, yet she would hold to what was told her by her superiors, because faith comes through them. and there is no room for deception, whereas revelations from angels might be illusory.

"With such regard for obedience, she asked me one day at Toledo—probably at the time when she saw the vision of the castle—whether it was true that God was in all things by his power, presence, and essence, to which I replied in the affirmative, explaining it as best I could on the authority of St Paul, particularly where he says that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us. Laying stress on these words, 'shall be revealed in us', she was so overjoyed that I was quite astonished. Though her question seemed to me a kind of curiosity, I could not help thinking there was some mystery about it, for she said: 'That is the very thing.'

"Secondly, she was greatly surprised at the malice of sin, since, notwithstanding the presence of God in these various ways, it prevents the soul from partaking of that powerful light.

"Thirdly, she derived such humility and self-knowledge from this vision, that from that moment she never thought of herself in all the good she was doing; for she learnt that all the beauty of the soul emanates from that resplendent light, and that the powers of the soul and of the body are

enlivened and strengthened by the Power established in their centre, whence comes all our good, so that we have but a small share in our good works. All the good she did, she from this moment referred to God as its principal author.

"Fourthly, she derived from this vision the subject of the book she was ordered to write on prayer, comparing the seven rooms of the castle to as many degrees of prayer whereby we enter within ourselves and draw nearer to God. So that, penetrating to the depths of our soul and gaining perfect self-knowledge, we reach the seventh room where God himself dwells, with whom we become united by as perfect a union as is possible in the present life, being made partakers of his light and love.

"I will say no more of this vision and the mansions, because your Reverence must now have seen this admirable book, and must know with what accuracy, with what majestic doctrine, with what lucid examples she describes the progress of the soul from the gate to the very centre. It is clearly seen in this treatise how she communicated with our Lord, and how he vouchsafed to place her in the centre and to unite her with himself, as she terms it, by the bonds of *matrimony* and an inseparable union." *(Relation addressed to Luis de Leon by Fr. Diego de Yepes, of the Order of St Jerome.)*

THIRD MEDITATION

THE SOUL DWELLING OF THE BLESSED TRINITY

PRELUDE.—Once while I was in prayer,[1] our Lord showed me by a certain kind of intellectual vision the condition of a soul in a state of grace: in its company I saw by intellectual vision the most Holy Trinity, from whose companionship the soul derived a power which was a dominion over the whole earth. Another time, I was recollected in that companionship which I ever have in my soul, and it seemed to me that God was present therein in such a way that I remembered how St Peter said: "Thou art Christ. the Son of the living God".[2] for the living God was in my soul. It is then impossible to doubt of the indwelling of the Trinity in our souls by presence, power and essence.

FIRST POINT

As God has a dwelling-place in heaven, so has he in the soul, where none but he may abide, and which may be termed a second heaven.[3] When he is so pleased, the three Persons of the most Blessed Trinity reveal themselves, preceded by an illumination which shines on the spirit like a most dazzling cloud of light. The three Persons are distinct from one another; a sublime knowledge is infused into the soul, imbuing it with a certainty of the truth that the three are of one substance, power and knowledge, and are one God. Thus, that which we hold as a doctrine of faith, the soul now, so to speak, understands by sight, although it beholds the Blessed Trinity neither by the eyes of the body nor of the soul, for this is no imaginary vision. All the three Persons here communicate themselves to the soul, speak to it, and make it understand the words of our Lord in the Gospel that he and the Father and the Holy

[1] *Spiritual Relation*, ix.
[2] *Tu es Christus, Filius Dei vivi* (Matt. xvi 16).
[3] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. i.

Ghost will come and make their abode with the soul which loves him, and which keeps his commandments.[1]

O my God, how different from merely hearing and believing these words is it to realize their truth in this way! Day by day a growing astonishment takes possession of this soul, for the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity seem never to depart; it sees with certainty, in the way I have described, that they dwell far within its own centre and depth.

Second Point

You may fancy that such a person is beside herself and that her mind is too inebriated to care for anything else. On the contrary, she is far more active than before in all that concerns God's service, and, when at leisure, she enjoys this blessed companionship. Unless she first deserts God, I believe he will never so fail her as to allow her to lose this fervour, after once bestowing it; at the same time, she is more careful than before to avoid offending him in any way.

This presence is not always so entirely realized, that is, so distinctly manifest, as at first, or as it is at times when God renews this favour, otherwise the recipient could not possibly attend to anything else, nor live in society. Although not always seen by so clear a light, yet whenever she reflects on it, she feels the companionship of the Blessed Trinity. This is as if, when we were with other people in a very well lighted room, someone were to darken it by closing the shutters; we should feel certain that the others were still there, although unable to see them.

You may ask: "Could she not bring back the light and see them again?" This is not in her power; when our Lord chooses, he will open the shutters of the understanding.

[1] *Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit, et Pater meus diliget eum, et ad eum veniemus et apud eum mansionem faciemus* (Joan. xiv 23). Through the signal favour St Teresa relates she received the experimental knowledge of the Blessed Trinity's presence in the soul of the just man. This presence of the three divine Persons and their union with the soul are shared by all who are in a state of grace with God though they are not known of and sensible to them. This permits to place in a book destined to all Christian souls these texts of St Teresa which are related with the highest states of mystical life. They must revive in us the remembrance of a truth which is taught by our faith.

He shows her great mercy in never quitting her and in making her realize it so clearly.

Third Point

A certain person so favoured found she had improved in all the virtues;[1] whatever were her trials or labours, the centre of her soul seemed to her never moved from its resting-place. Thus, in a manner, her soul seemed divided; a short time after God had done her this favour, when she was undergoing great sufferings, she complained of her soul as Martha did of Mary, reproaching it with enjoying solitary peace while leaving her so full of troubles and occupations that she could not keep it company.

This may seem extravagant, yet though the soul is known to be undivided, it is fact and no fancy, and often happens. Interior effects show for certain that there is a positive difference between the soul and the spirit, although they are one with each other.

As for the soul so favoured, she enjoys unspeakable peace.[2] Likings and dislikings have so little power to take from it the presence of the three Persons, of which, while it continues, it is so impossible to doubt, that it seems clearly to know by experience what is recorded by St John, that God will make his dwelling in the soul: and not only by grace, but because he will have the soul feel that presence, and it brings with it so many blessings, particularly this, that there is no need to run after reflections to learn that God is there.

Colloquy

O my Lord and my Good![3] I cannot utter these words without tears, nor without rejoicing in my soul; for thou wilt be with us, and art with us, in the Sacrament. We may believe this most truly, for so it is. If our sins stand not in the way, we may rejoice in thee, because thou rejoicest in us; for thou hast told us that thy delight is to be with the children of men. O my Lord, what does it mean? Whenever I hear these words, they always give me great con-

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. i.
[2] *Relations*, xi.
[3] *Life*, ch. xiv.

solation, and did so even when I was most wicked.[1] O my hope, my Father, my Creator, my true Lord, my Brother! My soul overflows with joy at remembering how thou hast said: "My delight is to be with the sons of men."[2] O Sovereign of heaven and earth! After such words as these what sinner should despair? Canst thou find no one else in whom to delight, that thou dost seek out such a repulsive worm as myself? At the baptism of thy Son, thy voice was heard to say thou didst delight in him.[3] Dost thou, then, put us on a par with him, Lord? What infinite mercy! What favour, far transcending our deserts! Can we mortals forget all this? Call to mind, my God, our great misery, and look upon our frailty, for thou knowest all things.

Resolution

Let us reflect upon what gifts our souls possess, who dwells within them, and how extremely precious they are.[4]

READING

Some Favours granted to St Teresa by the Most Holy Persons of the Blessed Trinity

"One day—it was the eve of Pentecost—I went after Mass to a very lonely spot, where I used to pray very often and began to read about the feast in the book of a Carthusian, and reading of the marks by which beginners, proficients, and the perfect may know that they have the Holy Spirit, it seemed to me when I had read of these three states, that by the goodness of God, so far as I could understand, the Holy Ghost was with me. I praised God for it; and calling to mind how, on another occasion, when I read this, I was very deficient in virtue—for I saw most distinctly at that time how inferior I was then from what I was now—I recognized herein the great mercy of our Lord to me, and so began to consider the place which my sins had earned

[1] *Exclamations*, vii.
[2] *Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum* (Prov. viii 31).
[3] Matt. iii 17.
[4] *Interior Castle*, 1st Mansion, ch. i.

for me in hell, and I praised God exceedingly, because it seemed as if I did not know my own soul again, so great a change had come over it.

"While thinking of these things, my soul was carried away with extreme violence, and I knew not why. It seemed as if it would have gone forth out of the body, for it could not contain itself, nor was it able to hope for so great a good. The impetuosity was so excessive that I had no power left, and I think different from what I had been used to. I knew not what ailed my soul, nor what it desired, for it was so changed. I leaned for support, for I could not sit, because my natural strength had utterly failed.

"Then I saw over my head a dove, very different from those we usually see, for it had not the same plumage, but wings formed of small shells shining brightly. It was larger than an ordinary dove; I thought I heard the rustling of its wings. It hovered about me during the space of an *Ave Maria*. But such was the state of my soul, that in losing itself it lost also the sight of the dove. My spirit grew calm with the presence of such a guest, and yet, I think, a grace so wonderful might have disturbed and frightened it; as it began to rejoice in the vision, it was delivered from all fear, and with the joy came peace, my soul continuing entranced. The joy of this rapture was exceedingly great; and for the rest of that festival time I was so amazed and bewildered that I did not know what I was doing, or how I could have received so great a grace. I neither heard nor saw anything, so to speak, because of my great inward joy. From that day I perceived in myself a very great progress in the highest love of God, together with a great increase in the strength of my virtues. May he be blessed and praised for ever! Amen." (*Life by herself,* ch. xxxviii.)

"One day, in very great distress about the state of the Order and casting about for means to succour it, our Lord said to me: '*Do what is in thy power and leave me to myself, and be not disquieted by anything; rejoice in the blessing thou hast received, for it is a very great one. My Father is pleased with thee, and the Holy Ghost loves thee*'." (*Spiritual Relation*, iii.)

"Another day, being in prayer, I fell into a profound

trance; and it seemed to me that our Lord had taken me up in spirit to his Father, and said to him: 'Whom thou hast given to me, I give to thee'; and he seemed to draw me near to himself. This is not an imaginary vision, but one most certainly genuine and so spiritually subtile that it cannot be explained. He spoke certain words to me which I do not remember; some of them referred to his grace, which he betows on me. He kept me by him for some time." (*Spiritual Relation*, iv.)

"One Tuesday after the Ascension, having prayed for awhile after Communion in great distress, because I was so distracted that I could fix my mind on nothing, I complained of our poor nature to our Lord. The fire began to kindle in my soul, and I saw, as it seemed to me, the most Holy Trinity distinctly present in an intellectual vision, whereby my soul understood through a certain representation, as a figure of the truth, so far as my dulness could understand, how God is Three and One, and then it seemed to me that all the Three Persons spoke to me, that they were distinctly present in my soul, and said to me 'that from that day forth I should see that my soul had grown better in three ways, and that each one of the Three Persons had bestowed on me a distinct grace—in charity, in suffering joyfully, in a sense of that charity in my soul, accompanied with fervour.' I learnt the meaning of these words of our Lord: that the Three Divine Persons will dwell in the soul that is in a state of grace. The vision of the Three Divine Persons, one God, made so profound an impression on my soul that, had it continued, it would have been impossible for me not to be continually recollected in so divine a company. What I saw and heard is beyond my power to describe." (*Spiritual Relation*, iv.)

"Another day I remained in the prayer which I still enjoy, that of keeping my soul in the company of the most Holy Trinity, and it seemed to me that the Person of the Father drew me to himself, and spoke most consoling words to me; among them were these, while showing how he loved me: *I gave thee my Son, and the Holy Ghost and the Virgin: what canst thou give me?*" (*Spiritual Relation*, iii.)

FOURTH MEDITATION

MORTAL SIN

PRELUDE.—Our Lord showed me the condition of a soul in sin: utterly powerless, like a person tied, bound and blindfolded, who, though anxious to see, yet cannot; being unable to walk or to hear, and in grievous obscurity.[1] I was so exceedingly sorry for such souls, that to deliver only one any trouble seemed to me light. I thought it impossible for anyone who saw this as I saw it—and I can hardly explain it—willingly to forfeit so great a good or continue in so evil a state.

FIRST POINT

I wish you, Christians, to consider the state to which mortal sin brings our magnificent and beautiful castle; this pearl of the East, this tree of life planted beside the living waters of life which symbolize God himself.[2] No night can be so dark, no gloom nor blackness can compare to its obscurity. Suffice it to say that the sun in the centre of the soul, which gave it such splendour and beauty, is totally eclipsed, though the spirit is as fitted to enjoy God's presence as is the crystal to reflect the sun.

When the soul is in mortal sin nothing can profit it; none of its good works merit an eternal reward, since they do not proceed from God as their first principle, and by him alone is our virtue real virtue. The soul separated from him is no longer pleasing in his eyes, because by committing a mortal sin, instead of seeking to please God, it prefers to gratify the devil, the prince of darkness, and so comes to share his blackness. I knew a person[3] to whom our Lord revealed the result of a mortal sin, and who said she thought no one who realized its effects could ever commit it, but would suffer unimaginable torments to avoid it. This vision made her very desirous for all to realize this truth.

[1] *Relations*, iii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, 1st Mansion, ch. ii.
[3] The Saint herself.

Second Point

In a state of grace the soul is like a well of limpid water, from which flow only streams of clearest crystal. Its works are pleasing both to God and man, rising from the River of Life, beside which it is rooted like a tree. Otherwise it would produce neither leaves nor fruit, for the waters of grace nourish it, keep it from withering from drought, and cause it to bring forth good fruit. But the soul, by sinning, withdraws from this stream of life, and, growing beside a black and fetid pool, can produce nothing but disgusting and unwholesome fruit. Notice that it is not the fountain and the brilliant sun which lose their splendour and beauty, for they are placed in the very centre of the soul and cannot be deprived of their lustre. The soul is like a crystal in the sunshine over which a thick, black cloth has been thrown, so that however brightly the sun may shine the crystal can never reflect it.

O Jesus! how sad a sight must be a soul deprived of light! What a terrible state the chambers of this castle are in! How disorderly must be the senses, the inhabitants of the castle, the powers of the soul—its magistrates, governors and stewards—blind and uncontrolled as they are! In short, as the soil in which the tree is now planted is in the devil's domain, how can its fruit be anything but evil? A man of great spiritual insight once told me that he was not so much surprised at such a soul's wicked deeds, as astonished that it did not commit even worse sins. May God in his mercy keep us from such great evil, for nothing in this life merits the name of evil in comparison with this, which delivers us over to evil which is eternal.

Third Point

Well may we pity the souls in mortal sin, when we reflect that we ourselves were once in the same state and that God may show them mercy also.[1] Let us, then, Christians, be most zealous in interceding for them, and never neglect it.[2] To pray for a soul in mortal sin is a far more profitable form of almsgiving than it would be to help a Christian whom we

[1] VIIth Mansion, ch. i. [2] Ist Mansion, ch. ii

saw with hands strongly fettered behind his back, tied to a post and dying of hunger—not for want of food, because plenty of the choicest delicacies lay near him, but because he was unable to put them into his mouth—although he was extremely exhausted and on the point of dying, and that not a temporal death, but an eternal one. Would it not be extremely cruel of us to stand looking at him, and give him nothing to eat? What if by your prayers you could loose his bonds? Now you understand. For the love of God I implore you constantly to remember in your prayers souls in a like case.

And you, O souls, redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, take these things to heart! Have mercy on yourselves. If you realize your pitiable condition, how can you refrain from trying to remove the darkness from the crystal of your souls? Remember, if death should take you now, you would never again enjoy the light of this Sun.[1] Return, return to your senses, open your eyes, and with strong cries and tears beg for light from him who gives it to all the world.

Colloquy

O my God and my Lord![2] What help is there for one whom thou hast raised from his sins, who seeing how miserably he had lost all for the sake of a momentary pleasure, is now resolved with the aid of thy grace to spend his life in pleasing thee? Thou treasure of my soul, who never forsakest those who love thee and ever hearest those who cry to thee, how can man live and stave off death at the thought of all he lost by forfeiting his baptismal innocence? The happiest life for him is for sorrow to render his life a living death. Yet, how can the soul that loves thee tenderly endure this?

Resolution

Always pray fervently to God for sinners, who live in blindness and do deeds of darkness.[3]

[1] *Exclamations*, xi. [2] *Exclamations* iii.
[3] *Interior Castle*, Ist Mansion, ch. ii.

READING

St Teresa's Feelings about Mortal Sin

"The holy Mother's desire to see all men observe the law of God was so vehement, that nothing gave her more pain than to hear of a mortal sin having been committed, so that I have sometimes seen her bursting into bitter tears. She was inconsolable when she learnt that in some place or circumstance a soul had offended God grievously." (Dep. of Mother Isabel of St Dominic, Inform. of Avila.)

"The faults of good people, the progress and ravages of heresies, the needs of the Church tormented her greatly, caused her to shed abundant tears and to perform rigorous penances. It was with this motive that she introduced in her monasteries such severe observance and strict poverty. She was mortally wounded at thinking that by some sin she might have lost the grace of God. Once this thought caused her such an agony, that she besought God with tears to spare her from this calamity and misfortune." (Ribera, lib. iv, cap. x.)

"I remember," she relates, "that one day during the prayer time, I was extremely distressed by the thought whether I was in the grace of God, and that I could never know it; I wished to die, in order that I might not live a life in which I was not sure that I was not dead in sin, for there could be no death more dreadful for me than to think that I had sinned against God. I was in great straits at this thought; I implored him not to suffer me to fall into sin; this was with great sweetness dissolved in tears. Then I heard that I might console myself and trust that I was in a state of grace, because a love of God like mine, together with the graces and feelings with which His Majesty filled my soul, was inconsistent with a state of mortal sin." (*Life written by herself,* ch. xxxiv.)

SECOND DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

HELL

PRELUDE.—Let us remember, Christians, those who are in hell.[1] They lack the submission to the divine will and the resignation and consolation God gives a faithful soul, and the solace of knowing that their pains benefit them. The damned will continually suffer more and more in regard to accidental pains. The soul feels far more keenly than the body, and the greatest torments are incomparably less severe than those endured by the lost, who also know that their anguish will last for ever; what, then, will become of these miserable souls? What can we do or suffer, in our short lives, which is worth reckoning, if it will free us from such terrible and endless torments?

FIRST POINT

Unless you have learnt by experience,[2] it would be impossible to make you realize how acute are spiritual pangs and how different from physical pain.

I was one day in prayer when I found myself in a moment, without knowing how, plunged apparently into hell.[3] I understood that it was our Lord's will that I should see the place which the devils kept in readiness for me, and which I had deserved by my sins. It was but a moment, but it seems impossible I should ever forget it, even if I were to live many years. The entrance seemed to me by a long, narrow pass like a furnace, very low, dark and close. The ground seemed to be saturated with water, mere mud, exceedingly foul, sending forth pestilential odours, and covered with

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. xi.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. x.
[3] *Life*, ch. xxxii.

loathsome vermin. At the end was a hollow place in the wall, like a closet, and in that I saw myself confined.

Left in that pestilential place, and utterly without the power to hope for comfort, I could neither sit nor lie down: there was no room. I was placed, as it were, in a hole in the wall; and those walls, terrible to look on of themselves, hemmed me in on every side. I could not breathe. There was no light, but all was thick darkness. I do not understand how it was: though there was no light, yet everything that can give pain by being seen was visible.

All this was even pleasant to behold in comparison to what I felt there. There is no exaggeration in what I am saying. But as to what I then felt, I do not know where to begin, if I were to describe it; it is utterly inexplicable. I felt a fire in my soul. I cannot see how it is possible to describe it. My bodily sufferings were unendurable. I have undergone most painful sufferings in my life, and, as the physicians say, the greatest that can be borne, such as the contraction of my sinews when I was paralyzed, without speaking of others of different kinds—yea, even those inflicted on me by Satan—yet all these were as nothing in comparison with what I felt then, especially when I saw that there would be no intermission, nor any end to them.

Second Point

These sufferings were nothing in comparison with the anguish of my soul, a sense of oppression, of strifling and of pain so keen, accompanied by so hopeless and cruel an affliction, that I know not how to speak of it. If I said that the soul is continually being torn from the body, it would be nothing, for that implies the destruction of life by the hands of another; but here it is the soul itself that is tearing itself in pieces. I cannot describe that inward fire or that despair, surpassing all torments and all pain. I did not see who it was that tormented me, but I felt myself on fire and torn to pieces, as it seemed to me, and, I repeat it, this inward fire and despair are the greatest torments of all.

Our Lord at that time would not let me see more of hell. Afterwards, I had another most fearful vision, in which I saw the punishment of certain sins. They were most

horrible to look at; but, because I felt none of the pain, my terror was not so great. In the former vision, our Lord made me really feel those torments, and that anguish of spirit, just as if I had been suffering in the body there. I know not how it was, but I understood distinctly that it was a great mercy that our Lord would have me see with my own eyes the very place from which his compassion saved me. I have listened to people speaking of these things, and I have, at other times, dwelt on the various torments of hell, though not often, because my soul made no progress by way of fear; and I have read of the divers tortures, and how the devils tear the flesh with red-hot pincers. But all is as nothing before this; it is a wholly different matter. In short, the one is a reality, the other a picture; and all burning here in this life is as nothing in comparison with that fire.

I was so terrified by that vision—and that terror is on me even now while I am writing—that, though it took place nearly six years ago, the natural warmth of my body is chilled by fear even now when I think of it; and so amid all the pain and suffering which I may have had to undergo in this world is as nothing. It seems to me that we complain without reason. I repeat it, this vision was one of the greatest mercies of our Lord. It has been to me of the greatest service. Because it has destroyed any fear of trouble and of contradiction of the world, and because it has made me strong enough to bear up against them, and to give thanks to our Lord, who has been my Deliverer, as it now seems to me, from such fearful and everlasting pain.

Third Point

Ever since that time, as I was saying, everything seems endurable in comparison with one instant of suffering such as those I had to bear in hell. I am filled with fear, when I see that, after frequently reading books which describe in some manner the pains of hell, I was not afraid of them. Where was I? How could I take any pleasure in those things which led me directly to so dreadful a place? It was also that vision that filled me with the very great distress which I feel at the sight of so many lost souls, especially of the Lutherans—for they were once members of the

Church by Baptism—and also gave me the most vehement desires for the salvation of souls; for certainly I believe that, to save even one from overwhelming torments, I would most willingly endure many deaths.

If here on earth we see one whom we especially love in great trouble or pain, our very nature seems to bid us compassionate him, and if those pains be great, we are troubled ourselves. What then must it be to see a soul in danger of pain, the most grievous of all pains, for ever? Who can endure it? It is a thought no heart can bear without anguish. Here we know that pains end with life at last, and that there are limits to it. Yet the sight of it moves our compassion greatly. That other pain has no ending; and I know not how we can be calm when we see Satan carry so many souls away.

This also makes me wish that, in a matter which concerns us so greatly, we did not rest satisfied with doing less than we can do on our part—that we left nothing undone. May God vouchsafe to give us his grace for that end! When I consider that, notwithstanding my very great wickedness, I took some pains to please God, and abstained from certain things which I know the world makes light of; that, in short, I suffered grievous infirmities, and with great patience, which our Lord gave me; that I was not inclined to murmur or to speak ill of anybody; that I could not, I believe, wish harm to anyone; that I was not, to the best of my recollection, either avaricious or envious so as to be grievously offensive in the sight of God; and that I was free from many other faults—for though so wicked, I had lived constantly in the fear of God—I had to look at the very place which the devils kept ready for me. It is true that, considering my faults, I had deserved a still heavier chastisement, but for all that, I repeat it, the torment was fearful, and we run a great risk whenever we please ourselves. No soul should either take rest or pleasure that is liable to fall every moment into mortal sin. Let us then, for the love of God, avoid all occasions of sin, and our Lord will help us, as he has helped me.

COLLOQUY

May it please thee, O Lord God, never to let me out of

thy hands, lest I should turn back and fall, now that I have seen the place where I must dwell if I do.[1] I entreat thee, for thy Majesty's sake, never to permit it. How often didst thou save me from that fearful prison! and how I used to get back to it contrary to thy will! Blessed for ever be thou, O my God! and, oh, manifest is it that thou didst love me much more than I loved myself. O my Sovereign and my Lord! Remember that thou art a God of mercy; do thou prove it to this poor sinner and worm who is so bold with thee. Look, O God, upon my desires and on the tears with which I beg this of thee, and, forgetting my evil actions, for thine own sake, take pity on the many perishing souls.[2]

RESOLUTION

Let us, for the love of God, avoid all occasions of sin.[3]

READING

ST TERESA'S VISIONS ABOUT A LOST MAN

"I had a vision which frightened me very much. I was in a place where a certain person died, who, as I understood, had led a very bad life, and that for many years. But he had been ill for two years, and in some respects seemed to have reformed. He died without confession; nevertheless I did not think he would be damned. When the body had been wrapped in the winding-sheet, I saw it laid hold of by a multitude of devils, who seemed to toss it to and fro, and also to treat it with great cruelty. I was terrified at the sight, for they dragged it about with great hooks. But when I saw it carried to the grave with all the respect and ceremoniousness common to all, I began to think of the goodness of God, who would not allow the person to be dishonoured, but would have the fact of his being his enemy concealed.

"I was almost out of my senses at the sight. During the whole of the funeral service I did not see one of the evil

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxii. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch iii. [3] *Life*, ch. xxxiii.

spirits. Afterwards, when the body was about to be laid in the grave, so great a multitude of them was therein to receive it that I was beside myself at the sight, and it required no slight courage on my part not to betray my distress. I thought of the treatment which that soul would receive, when the devils had such power over the wretched body. Would to God that all who live in mortal sin might see what I then saw—it was a fearful sight; it would go, I believe, a great way towards making them lead better lives.

"All this made me know more of what I owe to God, and of the evils from which he has delivered me. I was in great terror till I spoke of it to my confessor, and I thought it might be an illusion of Satan, in order to take away my good opinion of that person, who yet was not accounted a good Christian. The truth is that, whether it was an illusion or not, it makes me afraid whenever I think of it." (*Life written by herself,* ch. xxxiv.)

SECOND MEDITATION

THE JUDGEMENT

PRELUDE.—Once, when in prayer, I had a vision for a moment—I saw nothing distinctly, but the vision was most clear—how all things are seen in God and how all things are comprehended in him.[1] This vision is one of those grand graces which our Lord wrought in me, and one of those which put me to the greatest shame and confusion whenever I call my sins to remembrance. I believe, if it had pleased our Lord that I had seen this at an earlier time, or if they saw it who sin against him, we should have neither the heart nor the daring to do so.

FIRST POINT

Let us suppose the Godhead to be a most brilliant diamond, much larger than the whole world, and that all our actions are seen in that diamond, which is of such dimensions as to include everything, because nothing can be beyond it. It was a fearful thing for me to see, in so short a time, so many things together in that brilliant diamond, and a most piteous thing too, whenever I think of it, to see such foul things as my sins present in the pure brilliancy of that light.

So it is, whenever I remember it, I do not know how to bear it, and I was then so ashamed of myself that I knew not where to hide. Oh, that someone could make this plain to those who commit most foul and filthy sins, that they may remember their sins are not secret, and that God most justly resents them, seeing that they are wrought in the very presence of His Majesty, and that we are demeaning ourselves so irreverently before him! I saw too how completely hell is deserved for only one mortal sin, and how impossible it is to understand the exceeding great wickedness of committing it in the sight of majesty so great, and how

[1] *Life*, ch. xl.

abhorrent to his nature such actions are. In this we see more and more of his mercifulness, who, though we all know his hatred of sin, yet suffers us to live.

Second Point

The vision made me also reflect, that if one such vision as this fills the souls with such awe, what will it be in the day of judgement, when His Majesty will appear distinctly, and when we too shall look on the sins we have committed! O my God, I have been, oh, how blind! I have often been amazed at what I have written. And you, Christians, be amazed that I am still living. I who see such things, and know myself to be what I am! Blessed for ever be he who has borne with me so long!

But, alas, alas! my Creator, how terrific will be that day on which thy justice shall be executed![1] O Lord! how little do we Christians know thee![2] What will that day be in which thou comest as our Judge, since now, when thou comest as a Friend to thy spouse, the sight of thee strikes us with such awe? O Christians! what will it be when he says in wrath: "Go, accursed of my Father"![3] Let this impression be the result of the favour granted by God to the soul, and we shall reap no little benefit from it, since St Jerome, Saint as he was, ever kept the thought of the last judgement before his eyes. Thus we shall care nothing what sufferings we endure, for, long as they may last, the time is but a moment compared to this eternity of pain.

I sincerely assure that, wicked as I am, I have never feared the torments of hell, for they have seemed to me as nothing, when I remembered that the lost would see the beautiful, meek and pitiful eyes of our Lord turned on them in wrath. I have thought, all my life, that this would be more than my heart could bear. Almighty God of mine, who, though we will it not, must be our Judge, why do we

[1] *Exclamations,* xiii.
[2] *Interior Castle,* VIth Mansion, ch. ix.
[3] *Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem aeternum* (Matt. xxv 41).

not realize the need to propitiate thee before that hour?[1] Yet, who, who indeed, would not desire to have so just a Judge? Happy the souls who, at that dread time, shall rejoice with thee, O my God and my Lord!

Third Point

O Christians, Christians, reflect on your brotherhood with this great God![2] Realize it; think not lightly of it: for this gaze is as full of terror for his persecutors as for love for his friends. O brothers, brothers, my brethren, children of this God, courage! courage! for you know that if we repent, His Majesty has promised to remember our sins and wickedness no more. O what boundless mercy! What more could we desire? Would not anyone be ashamed of asking so much? Now is the time to accept what this compassionate Lord and God of ours gives us. He seeks our friendship: who would deny it to him who refused not to shed all his blood and to lose his life for our sakes? See; this is nothing he asks from us, a mere nothing, and only what it is best for us to give him. Reflect—the Judge who will condemn you is now your Suppliant; you are not sure of living here another moment: why do you not strive to live the true life for all eternity?

O children of men, how long will you be hard-hearted?[3] and steel yourselves against this meek Jesus? What? Can your malice endure against him for ever? No! for the life of man passes away like the flower of the field, and the Son of the Virgin will come at last to pronounce the terrible sentence.

Colloquy

Thou knowest, my Lord,[4] that the thought of seeing thy divine gaze turned on me in wrath in that last, terrible day of judgement has often terrified me far more than all I have heard of the tortures and furies of hell, and I besought thee

[1] *Exclamations*, iii. [2] *Exclamations*, xiii.
[3] *Filii hominum, usquequo gravi corde?* (Ps. iv 3).
[4] *Exclamations*, xiv.

of thy mercy to save me from such misery, as I beseech thee now, Lord! What evil could happen to me in this world approaching this? Give me all earthly ills, my God, but spare me this misery! Let me not lose thee, my God, nor the peaceful contemplation of thy beauty: thy Father gave thee to us, Lord; let me not lose so precious a jewel. I confess, Eternal Father, that I have kept it negligently, but that may still be remedied, Lord; it may be remedied while I still dwell in this land of exile.

Resolution

Do not neglect yourselves until you have such a fixed determination not to offend God, that you would rather forfeit a thousand lives than commit a mortal sin.[1] Be also extremely vigilant about venial faults.

READING

An Incident in the Life of St Teresa

"On our way to Seville," says Mother Mary of St. Joseph, "we stopped at an inn where nothing to eat was to be found, except the saltest of sardines; no water for drinking was available. Owing to the sardines, we felt so extremely thirsty that, seeing drinking was out of the question, we gave up our meal. The cart in which our holy Mother was stood on a dunghill, under a burning sun. The nuns in the waggon alighted, as did those from the other carts; all stood at the door of hers, in order to see and take shelter near her. We imagined that in this way we should feel the heat somewhat less. We arranged our mantles over our heads, to protect us from the sun and from some ill-behaved people inside the inn who annoyed us exceedingly. That there should be such wicked people among Christians is almost incredible. It was unbearable for us to hear such blasphemies, curses, and abominable words uttered by this

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xli.

wretched band. After their meal, probably on account of being parched with thirst, they grew more and more furious. They drew their swords and their altercation ended in a fight. We trembled with fright and hid our faces in our Mother's care. As for her, she remained perfectly calm.

"Advancing towards the combatants with marvellous courage," Ribera adds, "she said to them: 'My brothers, remember that God is here present, and will judge you. Struck with dread at these words, the men stopped fighting, ran away and disappeared." (Book iv. chap. xxi; Mary of St. Joseph; *Libro de las Recreaciones*, Recr. ix.)

THIRD MEDITATION

DEATH

PRELUDE.—We shall finish our journey, for everything passes rapidly away and comes to an end. O Christians, I beseech you, for the love of our Lord, to keep in mind how soon everything passes away.[1]

FIRST POINT

What will become of the poor soul which has just passed through the pains and anguish of death, when it falls at once into the clutches of Satan?[2] What a frightful fate! How it is torn and lacerated as it falls to hell! What a brood of different kinds of serpents swarm around it! How appalling is the place and what a miserable reception! A self-indulgent person, such as are most of the lost, can hardly bear to pass the night in a bad inn, yet here he will lodge for ever, *for ever*, to endless ages! What do you suppose will be the feelings of this unhappy soul? Let us not look for luxuries, Christians; we are well enough off here—it is only, only one night in a bad inn—thank God![3] Let us force ourselves to do penance in this life.

O God, O God![4] how I grieve at thinking of the feelings of a soul which has always been respected and loved, waited on, honoured and pampered, on clearly realizing its eternal perdition and that it is useless to try to turn away its thoughts from the truths of faith, as it did while on earth. It will find itself torn from its pleasures before it had begun to enjoy them, for truly all that ends with life passes like a puff of wind.

The soul sees itself among the hideous and merciless companions with whom it is to suffer for eternity, in the midst of a fetid pool of serpents, each of which strives to

[1] *Foundations*, ch. xxviii.
[2] *Exclamations*, xiv.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xl.
[4] *Exclamations*, x.

devour it more fiercely than the other; a horrible darkness, revealing nothing but tormenting and hideous objects, surrounds it, and no light appears, except a gloomy flame. Alas! this description falls short of the reality!

Second Point

Who so blinded the eyes of such a man that he never realizes these horrors, until plunged amongst them? O Lord! who stopped his ears from hearing the truths so often told him of the eternity of these torments? Ah, never-ending life! Oh! ceaseless tortures, ceaseless torments that last for ever! How is it, that men who fear the discomfort of sleeping on a hard bed, do not dread such anguish?

O Lord my God! I weep for the time when I ignored these horrors. Thou knowest my grief at seeing the multitude of men who turn their thoughts from eternal punishment: let there be one, O Lord, at least let there be *one* who asks thee to enlighten him, who is capable of leading many others to the truth! I ask not this favour for my own sake, Lord, for I do not deserve it, but beg it of thee by the merits of thy Son. Look on his Wounds, and forgive us as he forgave the men who inflicted them.

Third Point

On the contrary, how sweet death will be to her who has expiated all her sins and who needs no purgatory![1] She may begin to enjoy glory even in this world, and will fear nothing, but will be in perfect peace. Although we should not attain to this, Christians, let us beg God, that if we must suffer pain after death, it may be where it may be endured willingly, with the hope of deliverance, and where we shall forfeit neither his friendship nor his grace. What a boon it will be, at the hour of death, when we are going we know not where, to think that we are to be judged by him whom we have loved above all things, with an ardour that

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xl.

has crushed self-love. We may feel safe concerning the acquittal of our debts; we shall not be going into a foreign country, but into our fatherland, for it belongs to him whom we love so dearly, and who loves us in return.

Oh, if we were utterly detached,[1] if we never placed our happiness in anything of this world, how the pain caused by living always away from God would temper the fear of death by the desire of enjoying the true life![2] The fear of death is now very slight in me, who had always been in great dread of it; now it seems to me that death is a very light thing for one who serves God, because the soul is in a moment delivered thereby out of its prison, and at rest. The elevation of the spirit and the vision of things so high seem to me to have a great likeness to the flight of the soul from the body, in that it finds itself in a moment in the possession of these good things. We put aside the agonies of its dissolution, of which no great account is to be made; for they who love God in truth, and are utterly detached from the things of this life, must die with the greatest sweetness.

Colloquy

O my Joy, Lord of all things and my God![3] how long must I languish for thy presence? Oh tedious, oh painful, oh dying life! What lonely solitude! How hopeless is my case! How long, Lord, how long shall it endure? What shall I do, my sovereign Good, what shall I do? Shall I desire not to desire thee? . . . Alas, alas! my Creator, bitter anguish wrings this complaint from me, making me speak of that for which there is no remedy until thou providest one! The soul, thus pent in bondage, longs for liberty, yet would not move one hair's breadth from the path thou choosest for it. Do thou, my Glory, either increase my pain, or cure it altogether.

Ah, death, death, I know not why men dread thee, since life is found in thee! Yet who that has not always loved God in the past would fear thee not? Since I am such a one, what do I desire and ask? Will death but bring the

[1] *Life*, ch. xxi. [2] Ch. xxxviii. [3] *Exclamations*, vi.

punishment my sins so justly merit? Permit it not, my sovereign Good, for it cost thee dear to ransom me! O my soul, submit to the will of God: this is best for thee: serve him and trust to his mercy to ease thy pain, when by penance thou hast won some little claim to pardon for thy sins.

Resolution

Let us ask of God to remove what paralyzes our faith, so that we cannot see how inevitably we shall some day be either punished or rewarded.[1]

READING

Holy Death of Two Young Nuns Related by St Teresa

"When the time was come when our Lord was pleased to take Beatrice of the Incarnation out of this life, her sufferings grew, and she laboured under so many diseases at once, that the mere sight of her contentment under them drew the nuns often to visit her, because it made them praise our Lord. In particular the chaplain, who was the confessor of the monastery and a very great servant of God, had a great wish to be present at her death; he, having been her confessor, looked upon her as a Saint. God was pleased to grant him his desire, for, as she was in the full possession of her understanding, having already received the last Anointing, they sent for him to absolve her and help her to die, if his services should be needed that night. A little before nine o'clock, when all the sisters were with her, and he himself also, all her sufferings ceased, about a quarter of an hour before she died.

"She then in great peace lifted up her eyes; there was a joyous expression in her face, which seemed to shine, while she herself was as if gazing at something that filled her with gladness, for she smiled twice. All the sisters around her and the priest himself, so great was the spiritual joy and delight they then felt, could only say that they thought

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxx.

themselves in heaven. In that joy I am speaking of, with her eyes directed to heaven, she drew her last breath, looking like an angel; for we may believe, because of our faith and her life, that God took her into his rest, in recompense of her earnest desires to suffer for his sake.

"The chaplain declares, and he has said so to many, that at the moment her body was laid in the tomb, he perceived a most powerful and most sweet smell arising from it. The sister sacristan also declares that not one of the candles that were burning during the funeral rites and the burial suffered the least diminution of the wax. All this we may believe of the mercy of God. I spoke of it to a confessor of hers, of the Society of Jesus, to whom she had for many years gone to confession and who had the care of her soul, and he told me that there was nothing singular in it, and that it did not surprise him, for he knew that our Lord conversed much with her. May it please His Majesty, my children, to enable us to learn how to profit by a companionship good as hers was, and that of many others whom our Lord gives us in these houses!" (*Foundations,* ch. xi.)

"While I was at Toledo, one of the sisters became sick unto death. When she had received the Sacraments, and the last Anointing had been administered, her peace and joy were so great, that we felt we could ask her to recommend us to God in heaven and to the Saints to whom we had a devotion, as if she were only departing for some other country. Shortly before she died I went in to remain with her, having been before the most Holy Sacrament to beg for her a good death from our Lord. And so, when I went in, I saw our Lord standing in the middle of the bed's head, with his arms a little extended, as if protecting her. He said to me that I might be certain he would in the same way protect all the nuns who should die in these monasteries, and that they ought not to fear temptations in the hour of death. I was greatly comforted and recollected, and after a little while I spoke to her, when she said to me: 'Oh, mother, what great things I have to see!' and thus she died as an angel.

"I observed in some nuns who died afterwards a certain peace and quiet which was like a trance or the tranquillity

of prayer, with no sign of any temptation whatever. I trust, therefore, in the goodness of God, that he will have compassion on us in the hour of death, through the merits of his Son, and of his glorious Mother, whose habit we wear. Let us then, my daughters, strive to become true Carmelites, for the journey will soon be over; and if we knew the distress that comes upon men at this time, and the cunning and deceit with which Satan tempts them, we should make much of this grace". (*Ibid.*, ch. xvi.)

FOURTH MEDITATION

DETACHMENT FROM CREATURES

PRELUDE.—Remember you have but one soul;[1] you will die but once; you have only one life, which is short, and which you must live on your own account; there is only one heaven, which lasts for ever—this will make you indifferent to many things.

FIRST POINT

If the detachment be real, I think it is impossible for anyone who has it to offend our Lord.[2] I add that if the detachment be perfect, it will include everything else. I say "it will include everything else" because, if we cling to our Creator alone and care nothing for created things, His Majesty will infuse the virtues into us, so that, doing by degrees all that is in our power, we shall have little left with which to struggle, for our Lord will defend us against the devils and the whole world as well.[3] Do you think that it is a small gain to give ourselves entirely to him, keeping nothing for ourselves, since in his goodness all is contained?

And, however, many things will keep us from the holy liberty of spirit which we seek, in order that our souls may rise to their Creator, unimpeded by any earthly, leaden weight.

A valuable aid towards this is the constant remembrance of the vanity of all things, and of how quickly they pass away, that we may withdraw our affections from what is worthless, and fix them on what is eternal. Though this means seems inefficient, yet I assure you it gives great strength to the soul. We must keep watch over ourselves carefully in the most insignificant matters: when we are attached to anything we must turn our thoughts from it and fix them on God. His Majesty will help us to do this. As this detach-

[1] *Maxims.*
[2] *Foundations*, ch. iv.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. viii.

ment from ourselves and crossing our own wills is a hard matter, the union being so close and self-love being very strong, humility must here find its place. This virtue and detachment seem to me always to accompany one another. These virtues are two sisters who cannot be separated.

O sovereign virtues! rulers of all created things; queens of the world; our deliverers from all the snares and traps of the devil, dearly loved as you were by our teacher, Jesus Christ, who never for a moment lived without you! Those who possess you may sally forth and fight with all hell and the whole world and its temptations! Let them not be afraid, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They have no cause for dread, for they care not if all be lost—nor do they count it loss; their sole fear is lest they should offend their God; they implore him to preserve these virtues in their souls, lest by their own fault they should lose them.

It is true that these virtues have the property of hiding themselves from their owner's sight, so that he never believes he possesses them, and thus grows more perfect in them. Yet the possessor of these virtues soon unwittingly reveals them to those who talk to him.

Second Point

The detachment from all created things must be what most unites a soul with its Maker.[1] Without doubt, if we empty ourselves of all that belongs to the creature, depriving ourselves of it for the love of God, that same God will fill us with himself.[2] Our Lord Jesus Christ, when praying for his Apostles, asked that they might be made one with the Father and with himself, as Jesus Christ our Lord is in the Father and the Father in him.[3] I know not how love could be greater than this! Let none draw back from entering here, for His Majesty also said: "Not only for them do I

[1] *Foundations*, ch. iv.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. ii.
[3] *Ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu, Pater, in me et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint* (Joan. xvii 21).

pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me" ;[1] and he said : "I am in them."[2]

God help me! how true these words are and how clearly does the soul understand them which finds them fulfilled in itself! And so should all of us, were it not through our own fault, for the words of Jesus Christ, our King and our Lord, cannot fail. It is we who fail, by not disposing ourselves fitly, nor removing all that can obstruct this light, so that we do not behold ourselves in the mirror wherein our image is engraved.

I repeat, detach your heart from all things ;[3] seek God, and you will find him. O happy custody, Christians![4] O joyful renunciation of things so trifling and so base, which leads us to such a blessed state! What does it matter if all the world blames you and deafens you with abuse, while you are resting meanwhile in the arms of God? He is powerful to deliver you from all. Once, only, did he command that the world should be created, and it was created—to him, to will is to do.

Third Point

There are people who think themselves detached,[5] and who say so of themselves—and it ought to be so, for their vocation demands it, as well as the many years that have passed since some of them began to walk in the way of perfection—but my soul distinguishes clearly, and afar off, between those who are detached in words, and those who make good those words by deeds. The little progress of the former, and the great progress of the latter, make it plain. This is a matter which a person of any experience can see most clearly.

I do not mean that all who have enjoyed the first spiritual favours must necessarily be detached from everything in

[1] *Non pro eis rogo tantum, sed pro eis qui crediturі sunt per verbum eorum in me* (*ibid.*, 20).

[2] *Ego in eis* (*ibid* 23).

[3] *Maxims.*

[4] *Way of Perfection,* ch. xvi.

[5] *Life,* ch. xxi.

this world ;[1] but I wish them to know what they ought to be, and to try to mortify themselves in every way, otherwise they will stop here. . . . I believe that the reason why so many persons fail to become thoroughly spiritual is that they do not worthily respond, by their actions, to the first graces. They withdraw from our Lord's hands their will, which he considered his property; as they centre their affections on base things, he seeks other souls whose love for him is so fervent that he can grant them even more sublime favours. . . .[2] To yield ourselves entirely to our Creator, to submit our will to his and to detach ourselves from all created things, you already understand how important this is. Thus in a very short time we shall find ourselves at the end of our journey and shall drink of the fountain of living water.

If we are really humble and detach ourselves, [3] not only in our imagination, which often deceives us, but if we truly detach ourselves from all things, our Lord will grant us such favours that we do not know even how to wish for. May he be for ever praised and blessed! Amen.

Colloquy

O my Lord![4] The life we live is so full of danger! For some years past, so it seems to me, thou hast held me, by the hand ; and I see in myself desires and resolutions, in some measure tested by experience in many ways during that time, never to do anything, however slight it may be, contrary to thy will—though I must have frequently offended thy divine Majesty without being aware of it—and I also think that nothing can be proposed to me that I should not with great resolution undertake for thy love. In some things thou hast thyself helped me to succeed therein. I love neither the world, nor the things of the world ; nor do I believe that anything that does not come from thee can give me pleasure ; everything else seems to me a heavy cross.

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxi. [2] Ch. xxxii.
[3] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. ii. *Life*, ch. vi.

Still, I may easily deceive myself, and it may be that I am not what I say I am; but thou knowest, O my Lord, that, to the best of my knowledge, I lie not. I am afraid, and with good reason, lest thou shouldst abandon me; for I know now how far my strength and little virtue can reach, if thou be not ever at hand to supply them, and to help me never to forsake thee.

Resolution

Say often to yourself: It is time to escape from the land of Egypt and try to obtain humility and mortification.[1] When you possess these virtues, you will find the manna; then all things will taste sweet to you; however bitter the world may find them, to you they will be delicious.

READING

Examples of Illusion regarding Detachment related by St Teresa

"I have known some, in fact, I may say numerous souls, who have reached this state, and for many years have lived, apparently, a regular and well-ordered life, both of body and mind. It would seem that they must have gained the mastery over this world, or, at least, be extremely detached from it, yet if His Majesty sends very moderate trials, they become so disturbed and disheartened, as not only to astonish, but to make me anxious about them. Advice is useless; having practised virtue for so long, they think themselves capable of teaching it, and believe that they have abundant reason to feel miserable.

"The only way to help them is to compassionate their troubles; indeed, one cannot but feel sorry at seeing people in such an unhappy state. They must not be argued with, for they are convinced they suffer only for God's sake, and cannot be made to understand they are acting imperfectly, which is a further error in persons so advanced. No wonder

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. x.

they should feel these trials for a time, but I think they ought speedily to overcome their concern about such matters. God, wishing his elect to realize their own misery, often temporarily withdraws his favours. No more is needed to prove to us in a short time what we really are.

"Souls soon learn in this way; they perceive their faults clearly, and sometimes the discovery of how quickly they are overcome by but slight earthly trials is more painful than the subtraction of God's sensible favours. I consider that God thus shows them great mercy, for though their behaviour may be faulty, yet they gain greatly in humility. Not so with the people of whom I first spoke; they believe their conduct is saintly, and wish others to agree with them. I will give you some examples which will help us to understand and to try ourselves, without waiting for God to try us, since it would be far better to have prepared and examined ourselves beforehand.

"A rich man without a son or heir loses part of his property, but still has more than enough to keep himself and his household. If this misfortune grieves and disquiets him as though he were left to beg his bread, how can our Lord ask him to give up all things for his sake? This man will tell you he regrets losing his money because he wished to bestow it on the poor. I believe His Majesty would prefer me to conform to his will, and keep peace of soul while attending to my interests, to such charity as this. If this person cannot resign himself because God has not raised him so high in virtue, well and good: but let him know that he is wanting in liberty of spirit; let him beg our Lord to grant it him, and be rightly disposed to receive it.

"Another person has more than sufficient means to live upon, when an opportunity occurs for acquiring more property: if it is offered him, by all means let him accept it; but if he must go out of his way to obtain it and then continues working to gain more and more—however good his intention may be (and it must be good, for I am speaking of people who lead prayerful and good lives)—he cannot possibly enter the mansions near the King.

"Something of the same sort happens if such people meet with contempt or want of due respect. God often

gives them grace to bear it well, as he loves to see virtue upheld in public, and will not have it condemned in those who practise it, or else because these persons have served him faithfully, and he, our supreme Good, is exceedingly good to us all; nevertheless, these persons are disturbed, and cannot overcome or get rid of the feeling for some time. Alas! have they not long meditated on the pains our Lord endured and how well it is for us to suffer, and have even longed to do so? They wish everyone were as virtuous as they are: and God grant they do not consider other people to blame for their troubles and attribute merit to themselves!" (*Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. ii.)

THIRD DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

VENIAL SIN

PRELUDE.—Oh! we do not understand that sin is a pitched battle of all the senses and powers of the soul against God:[1] the greater the sinner's power, the more does he scheme to betray his King.

FIRST POINT

For the love of God, Christian souls, be most watchful.[2] I am extremely sorry when you feel no sorrow for any fault you have committed, for you ought to take to heart every sin, even a venial one. Notice one thing, and remember it for love of me. If a person is alive, however slightly you prick her with a needle, or with a little thorn, the most slender you can find, does she not feel it? Now, if the soul is not dead, but has a living love for God, is it not a great grace from him that she should feel pained at the least infringement of the vows she has taken or the obligations she is under?

It is true that we cannot help committing sins, but at all events let them not always be identical, lest they take root, for it would be hard to pull them up, and they may even send out many offshoots. If we set a plant or a shrub and water it every day, it will grow so sturdy that we shall want a spade and a fork to tear it up. This appears to be the case with any fault, however small, that we commit daily, unless we amend it; though it is easy to uproot it when it has only grown for a day or even for ten days.

We must pray to our Lord to grant us this amendment, for on our own account we can do little except add to our sins, instead of giving them up. Remember that this will

[1] *Exclamations*, xiii. [2] *Concept.*, ch. ii.

be of no small consequence to us in the terrible judgement at the hour of death, especially to those whom the Judge made his brides during their life-time.

Second Point

Sin, this is the illusion of which, Christian souls, I wish you to stand in fear.[1] You should beg God that temptation may not be strong enough to overcome you, but that he will give you the power to conquer it, for the evil one can do you little or no harm while you keep a good conscience. This is the important matter; this is the fear which I hope we shall never lose; this must be our defence.

If you wish to gain this fear, it is important for you to bear in mind how heinous a thing it is to offend God. This is a vital matter, especially if we can thus graft this virtue strongly in our souls. Until we possess it, we must act cautiously, keeping aloof from all places and persons that do not draw us to God. We must be careful to break our own will in whatever we do; we must take care that our words be edifying, and we must avoid places where the conversation is irreligious.

Oh, if we have not offended God, how easy it is for us to control the minions and slaves of hell! We must all serve him in the end, whether we will or no—the devils by force and we with alacrity. So that, if we are pleasing to him, they will be kept within bounds and will be unable to harm us, however they may tempt and lay their snares for us; in fact, they will only leave us with more merit.

When we have on our side the King omnipotent, our Lord most high, who can do all things,[2] and subjects all things to himself, there is nothing to be afraid of. I say if we walk, as I said before, in the truth, in the sight of His Majesty, with a pure conscience. And for this end, I would keep all my fear, that I may not for one instant offend him who in that instant is able to destroy us.

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xli. [2] *Life*, ch. xxvi.

Third Point

Remember this caution and advice;[1] it is most important for you not to neglect it until you have such a fixed determination not to offend God that you would rather forfeit a thousand lives than commit a mortal sin. You must also be extremely vigilant about venial faults, so that you would rather suffer persecution from the whole human race than fall into this offence. I am speaking about misdeeds that are committed with full consent, and which are deliberate, for who does not constantly lapse into inadvertent errors? But there is one advertency which is very deliberate and another so sudden, that to commit the sin and to know it seem one and the same thing, and we hardly realize what we are about, although, to a certain extent, we are aware of it. But from wilfully committing any sin, however small, may God deliver us. I cannot think how we dare to set ourselves against so great a Sovereign in however small a matter, though no offence against such majesty can be called "small", because we know that he is watching us. Such a fault seems to me thoroughly premeditated. It is as if we said: "Lord, although this displeases thee, yet I shall do it. I know that thou seest it and art angered at it: this I know, but I would rather follow my own fancies and desires than thy will." Is such a misdeed as this a little one? I think not; I think it is very, very serious.

Colloquy

What, O eternal father, can we do, save have recourse to thee and beg thee not to permit our enemies to lead us into temptation?[2] Let open assaults come, and with thine aid we can defend ourselves; but how can we detect these subtle snares? O my God! never must we cease to beg thy help. . . . .[3] O Lord, all our ills come from not fixing our eyes on thee: if we looked at nothing else but where we are

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xli.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxix.
[3] Ch. xvi.

going, we should soon arrive, but we fall a thousand times and stumble and go astray, because we do not keep our gaze bent on thee who art the "Way."[1] May it please thy Majesty that we understand how one venial sin can do us more harm than all hell together.

Resolution

Let us try to obtain from God an intense desire neither ever to displease him, in however small a matter, nor to commit any avoidable imperfection.[2]

READING

St Teresa's Careful Avoidance of Venial Sin. Her Visions of Souls in Purgatory

"The purity of conscience of this religious astonish both her confessors and her nuns," declared one of her confessors. "It can be said that her thoughts and actions are centred solely on God and her spiritual progress. Nothing in the world would she do if she knew it to be wrong or venial sin, however slight. She only thinks of becoming better and attaining a high degree of perfection; with this view she founded the little convent of St Joseph at Avila, where she has established the most lofty perfection that can be reached on earth by women or men, as can be testified by those acquainted with the manner of life practised in it." (Relation of Fr Peter Ibanez, of the Order of St Dominic.) St Teresa highly praised this religious in chapter xxxviii of her *Life*, and said, amongst other things, that she saw his soul entering heaven without passing through the flames of Purgatory.

Now let the Saint relate to us some visions concerning souls who were expiating in Purgatory some faults we sometimes consider light.

"They told me that one who had been our Provincial—he was then of another province—was dead. He was a man

[1] *Life*, ch. xxv. [2] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. vi.

of great virtue, with whom I had had a great deal to do, and to whom I was under many obligations for certain kindness shown to me. When I heard that he was dead I was exceedingly troubled, because I trembled for his salvation, seeing that he had been superior for twenty years. That is what I dread very much, for the care of souls seems to me to be full of danger. I went to an oratory in great distress, and gave up to him all the good I had ever done in my whole life—it was little enough—and prayed our Lord that his merits might fill up what was wanting, in order that his soul might be delivered from Purgatory.

"While I was thus praying to our Lord as well as I could, he seemed to me to rise up from the depths of the earth on my right hand, and I saw him ascend to heaven in exceeding great joy. He was a very old man then, but I saw him as if he were only thirty years old, and I thought even younger, and there was a brightness in his face. This vision passed away very quickly; but I was so exceedingly comforted by it that I could never again mourn his death, although many persons were distressed at it, for he was very much beloved. So greatly comforted was my soul, that nothing disturbed it, neither could I doubt the truth of the vision. I mean that it was no illusion.

"I had this vision about a fortnight after his death; nevertheless I did not omit to obtain prayers for him, and I prayed myself, only I could not pray with the same earnestness that I should have done if I had not seen that vision. For when our Lord showed him thus to me, it seemed to me afterwards when I prayed to His Majesty—and I could not help it—that I was like one who gave alms to a rich man. Later on I heard an account of the death he died in our Lord—he was far away from here; it was one of such great edification, that he left all wondering to see how recollected, how penitent, and how humble he was when he died.

"A nun who was a great servant of God, died in this house.[1] On the next day one of the sisters was reciting the

[1] The monastery of the Incarnation.

lesson in the Office of the Dead, which was said in the choir for that nun's soul, and I was standing myself to assist her in saying the versicle, when in the middle of the lesson I saw the departed nun, as I believe, in a vision ; her soul seemed to rise on my right hand, like the soul of the Provincial, and ascend to heaven. This vision was not imaginary, like the preceding, but like those others of which I have spoken before ; it is not less certain, however, than the other visions I had.

"Another nun died in the same house of mine: she was about eighteen or twenty years of age, and had always been sickly. She was a great servant of God, attentive in choir, and a person of great virtue. I certainly thought that she would not go to Purgatory, on account of her exceeding merits, because the infirmities under which she had laboured were many. While I was saying the Office, before she was buried—she had been dead about four hours—I saw her rise in the same place and ascend to heaven." (*Life by herself,* ch. xxxviii.)

SECOND MEDITATION

PEACE OF SOUL

PRELUDE.—Peace, peace be unto you, Christians, as our Lord said and many a time proclaimed to his Apostles.[1] Believe me, if we neither possess nor strive to obtain this peace at home, we shall never find it abroad.[2]

FIRST POINT

There are souls who hear our Lord calling them, for as they approach nearer to where His Majesty dwells, he proves a loving Neighbour. Such are the pity and compassion of this Lord of ours! They may still be engaged in the amusements and business, the pleasures and vanities of this world. While in this state we continually fall into sin and rise again, for the creatures amongst whom we dwell are so venomous, so vicious and so dangerous, that it is almost impossible to avoid being tripped up by them. Yet so desirous is our Lord that we should seek him and enjoy his company, that in one way or another he never ceases calling them to him. So sweet is his voice, that the poor soul is disconsolate at being unable to follow his bidding at once.

Do not be downcast, Christian souls, if you have not responded immediately to our Lord's voice, for His Majesty is willing to wait for us many a day, and even many a year, especially when he sees perseverance and good desires in our hearts. Perseverance is the first essential; with this we are sure to profit greatly.

However, the devils now fiercely assault the soul in a thousand different ways. They set on us thoughts about the world and its joys which they picture as unending; they remind us of the high esteem men hold us in, of our friends

[1] Luc. xxiv 36; Joan. xx 19. [2] *Interior Castle*, IInd Mansion.

and relations; they tell us how penance would injure our health: in fine, the evil spirits place a thousand impediments in the way.

O Jesus! what turmoil the devils cause in the poor soul! How unhappy it feels, not knowing whether she must go forward! And, on the other hand, reason shows it the delusion of overrating worldly things, while faith teaches what alone can satisfy its cravings; memory reminds it how all earthly joys end. The will inclines to love our Lord and longs to make some return to him who is so amiable and who has given so many proofs of his love, especially by his constant presence within the soul, which this faithful Lover never quits, ever accompanying it and giving it life and being. The understanding aids by showing that, however many years life might last, no one could ever wish for a better friend than God. Reason convinces it that it should cease to seek another home abroad, its own being full of riches that it can enjoy at will.

Second Point

Surely these arguments are strong enough to defeat the devil's wiles! But, O my God, how the force of worldly habits, and the example of others who practise them, ruin everything! Our faith is so dead that we trust less to its teachings than to what is visible. Indeed, the soul passes through severe trials at this time, especially when the devil perceives from a person's character and behaviour that she is likely to make very great progress, for then all hell will league together to force her to turn back. O my Lord! what need there is here that, by thy mercy, thou shouldst prevent the soul from being deluded into forsaking the good begun! Enlighten it to see that its welfare consists in perseverance in the right way.

By the Blood which our Lord shed for us, I implore those who have not yet begun to enter into themselves, to stop this warfare: I beg those already started in the right path, not to let the combat turn them back from it. Let them

reflect that a relapse is worse than a fall, and see what ruin it would bring. They should confide in God's mercy, trusting nothing in themselves; then they will see how His Majesty will lead them from one mansion to another, and will set them in a place where, even in this life, they will enjoy a far greater happiness than they are able even to desire.

Since, O my God, thou dost see of what grave import is this peace to us, do thou incite Christians to strive to gain it! In thy mercy do not deprive those of it on whom thou hast bestowed it, for, indeed, until thou hast given them true peace and brought to where it is unending, they must ever live in fear. I do not mean that peace is unreal on earth because I say "true peace," but that such souls might have to begin all their struggles over again if they forsook God.

Third Point

Our King confers his peace and friendship on the soul in many ways, as we see daily, both during prayer and at other times, but our peace with him hangs by a single hair, as the expression is.[1] But how deeply should we grieve and regret it if, through our own fault, we do not attain to such close friendship with him, but content ourselves with a slighter intimacy![2] That excellent friendship, that sacred peace encourages the soul to wage war with the world, while yet preserving perfect confidence and calm within itself. What a happy lot for us to win this grace! It consists in so close a union with God's will that he and the soul are no longer divided, but their will is one—not in words and wishes only, but in deeds as well. When the soul sees that she can serve God better in any way, so ardent are her love and desires that she discusses no difficulties raised by her mind nor listens to the fears which it suggests, but allows faith to act, seeking no profit or comfort of her own, having learnt at last that her welfare consists entirely in this. Happy the soul that has won this peace from its God![3] It holds sway

[1] *Concept.*, ch. ii. [2] Ch. iii. [3] Ch. iii.

over all the trials and dangers of the world, and fears nothing when there is a question of rending any service to its Lord.

All the graces of God are now given to the soul in peace and silence, like the building of Solomon's Temple, where no sound was heard.[1] It is thus with this temple of God, this mansion of his, where he and the soul rejoice in each other alone in profound silence. Here the overflowing waters are given to the wounded heart; here she delights in the tabernacle of God; here the dove sent by Noah, to see whether the flood had subsided, has plucked the olive branch, showing that she has found firm land amongst the floods and tempests of this world. But alas! how many remain at the foot of the mountain, who might have climbed to its summit![2]

Colloquy

O my soul, let nothing trouble thee, let nothing affright thee. All things pass away. God never changes. Patience obtains everything. God alone suffices. Desire to see God; fear to lose him; grieve to be so far from him; rejoice to be brought near him—thus you will live in profound peace.[3]

Resolution

Ask for peace unceasingly with tears and longing; do all you can on your part to gain it from God.[4]

READING

St Teresa's Sufferings before she obtained Peace of Soul

"Going on from pastime to pastime, from vanity to vanity, from one occasion of sin to another, I began to expose myself to the greatest dangers: my soul was so dis-

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iii.
[2] *Concept.*, ch. ii.
[3] *Maxims.*
[4] *Concept.*, ch. ii.

tracted by many vanities, that I was ashamed to draw near unto God in any act of such special friendship as that of prayer. A Dominican father,[1] who was a very good man, fearing God, did me a very great service; for I confessed to him. He took upon himself the task of helping my soul in earnest, and of making me see the perilous state I was in. He sent me to Communion once a fortnight, and I, by degrees beginning to speak to him, told him about my prayer. He charged me never to omit it: that, anyhow, it could not do me anything but good. I began to return to it —though I did not cut off the occasions of sin—and never afterwards gave it up. My life became most wretched, because I learned in prayer more and more of my faults. On one side God was calling me; on the other I was following the world. All the things of God gave me great pleasure; and I was a prisoner to the things of the world. It seemed as if I wished to reconcile two contradictions, so much at variance one with another as are the life of the spirit and the joys and pleasures and amusements of senses.

"I suffered much in prayer; for the spirit was slave, and not master, and so I was not able to shut myself up within myself—that was my whole method of prayer—without shutting up a thousand vanities with me at the same time. I spent many years in this way; and I am now astonished that anyone could have borne it without abandoning either the one or the other. I know well that it was not in my power then to give up prayer, because he held me in his hand who sought me that he might show me greater mercies.

"O my God! if I might, I would speak of the occasions from which God delivered me, and how I threw myself into them again; and of the risks I ran of losing utterly my good name, from which he delivered me. I did things to show what I was, and our Lord hid the evil, and revealed some little virtue—if so be I had any—and made it great in the eyes of all, so that they always held me in much honour. For although my follies came occasionally into light, people would not believe it when they saw other things, which they thought

[1] Fr. Vincent Barron.

good. The reason is that he who knoweth all things saw it was necessary it should be so, in order that I might have some credit given me by those to whom in after years I was to speak of his service. His supreme munificence regarded not my great sins, but rather the desires I frequently had to please him, and the pain I felt because I had not the strength to bring those desires to good effect.

"O Lord of my soul! how shall I be able to magnify the graces which thou, in those years, didst bestow upon me? Oh, how, at the very time that I offended thee most, thou didst prepare me in a moment, by a most profound compunction, to taste of the sweetness of thy consolations and mercies! In truth, O my King, thou didst administer to me the most delicate and painful chastisement it was possible for me to bear; for thou knowest well what would have given me the most pain. Thou didst chastise my sins with great consolations. I do not believe I am saying foolish things, though it may well be. I am beside myself whenever I call to mind my ingratitude and my wickedness.

"It was more painful for me, in the state I was in, to receive graces, when I had fallen into grievous faults, than it would have been to receive chastisement; for one of those faults, I am sure, used to bring me low, shame and distress me, more than any diseases, together with many heavy trials, could have done. For, as to the latter, I saw that I deserved them; and it seemed to me that by them I was making some reparation for my sins, though it was but slight, for my sins are so many. But when I see myself receive graces anew, after being so ungrateful for those already received, that is to me, and I believe to all who have any knowledge or love of God, a fearful kind of torment. We may see how true this is by considering what a virtuous mind must be. Hence my tears and vexation when I reflected on what I felt, seeing myself in a condition to fall at every moment, though my resolutions and desires then—I am speaking of that time—were strong.

"It is not without reason that I have dwelt so long on this portion of my life. I see clearly that it will give no one pleasure to see anything so base; and certainly I wish those

who may read this to have me in abhorrence, as a soul so obstinate and so ungrateful to him who did so much for me. I could wish, too, I had permission to say how often at this time I failed in my duty to God, because I was not leaning on the strong pillar of prayer. I passed nearly twenty years on this stormy sea, falling and rising, but rising to no good purpose, seeing that I went and fell again. My life was one of so mean perfection that I scarcely made any account whatever of venial sins; and though of mortal sins I was afraid, I was not so afraid of them as I ought to have been, because I did not avoid the perilous occasions of them. I may say that it was the most painful life that can be imagined, because I had no sweetness in God, and no pleasure in the world.

"When I was in the midst of the pleasures of the world, the remembrance of what I owed to God made me sad; and when I was praying to God, my worldly affections disturbed me. This is so painful a struggle, that I know not how I could have borne it for a month, let alone for so many years. Nevertheless, I can trace distinctly the great mercy of our Lord to me, while thus immersed in the world, in that I had still the courage to pray. I say courage, because I know of nothing in the whole world which requires greater courage than plotting treason against the King, knowing that he knows it, and yet never withdrawing from his presence; for granting that we are always in the presence of God, yet it seems to me that those who pray are in his presence in a very different sense; for they, as it were, see that he is looking upon them, while others may be for days together without even once recollecting that God sees them.

"It is true, indeed, that during these years there were many months, and, I believe, occasionally a whole year, in which I so kept guard over myself that I did not offend our Lord, gave myself much to prayer, and took some pains, and that successfully, not to offend him. I speak of this now, because all I am saying is strictly true; but I remember very little of those good days, and so they must have been few, while my evil days were many. Still, the days that passed over without my spending a great part of them in

prayer were few, unless I was very ill, or very much occupied.

"When I was ill, I was well with God. I contrived that those about me should be so, too, and I made supplications to our Lord for this grace, and spoke frequently to him. Thus, with the exception of that year of which I have been speaking, during eight-and-twenty years of prayer, I spent more than eighteen in that strife and contention which arose out of my attempts to reconcile God and the world.

"I used to pray to our Lord for help; but, as it now seems to me, I must have committed the fault of not putting my whole trust in His Majesty, and of not thoroughly distrusting myself. I sought for help, took great pains; but it must be that I did not understand how all is of little profit if we do not root out all confidence in ourselves and place it wholly in God. I wished to live, but I saw clearly that I was not living, but rather wrestling with the shadow of death; there was no one to give me life, and I was not able to take it. He who could have given it me had good reasons for not coming to my aid, seeing that he had brought me back to himself so many times, and I as often had left him.

"My soul was now grown weary; and the miserable habits it had contracted would not suffer it to rest, though it was desirous of doing so. It came to pass one day, when I went into the oratory, that I saw a picture which they had put up there, and which had been procured for a certain feast observed in the house. It was a representation of Christ most grievously wounded, and so devotional that the very sight of it, when I saw it, moved me. So well did it show forth that which he suffered for us, so keenly did I feel the evil return I had made for those wounds, that I thought my heart was breaking. I threw myself on the ground beside it, my tears flowing plenteously, and implored him to strengthen me once for all, so that I might never offend him any more.

"From this day I seemed to have made greater progress; for I was now very distrustful of myself, placing all my confidence in God. It seems to me that I said to him then

that I would not rise up till he granted my petition. I do certainly believe that this was great service to me, because I have grown better ever since.

"At this time, the *Confessions* of St Augustine were given me. Our Lord seems to have so ordained it, for I did not seek them myself, neither had I ever seen them before. I had a very great devotion to St Augustine, because the monastery in which I lived when I was yet in the world was of his Order, and also because he had been a sinner; for I used to find great comfort in those Saints whom, after they had sinned, our Lord converted to himself. I thought they would help me, and that, as our Lord had forgiven them, so also he would forgive me. One thing, however, there was that troubled me—I have spoken of it before—our Lord had called them but once, and they never relapsed, while my relapses were now so many. This it was that vexed me. But calling to mind the love that he bore me, I took courage again. Of his mercy I never doubted once, but I did very often of myself.

"O my God, I am amazed at the hardness of my heart amidst so many succours from thee. I am filled with dread when I see how little I could do with myself, and how I was clogged, so that I could not resolve to give myself entirely to God. When I began to read the *Confessions*, I thought I saw myself there described, and began to recommend myself greatly to this glorious Saint. When I came to his conversion, and read how he had heard that voice in the garden, it seemed to me nothing less than that our Lord had uttered it for me: I felt so in my heart. I remained for some time lost in tears, in great inward affliction and distress. O my God, what a soul has to suffer because it has lost the liberty it had of being mistress over itself! and what torments it has to endure! I wonder now how I could live in torments so great: God be praised who gave me life, so that I may escape from so fatal a death! I believe that my soul obtained great strength from his divine Majesty and that he must have heard my cry, and had compassion upon so many tears." (*Life written by herself*, ch. vii-ix.)

THIRD MEDITATION

FEAR OF GOD

PRELUDE.—To those who, by the mercy of God,[1] have vanquished in the first combats, what can we say but: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord'?[2]

FIRST POINT

We may well call these souls blessed who vanquished in the first combats, for, as far as we can tell, unless they turn back on their course, they are on the safe road to salvation. Now, Christian souls, you see how important it is for them to conquer in their former struggles, for I am convinced that our Lord will henceforth never cease to keep them in security of conscience, which is no small boon.

I am wrong in saying "security", for there is no security in this life; understand that in such cases I always imply "if they do not cease to continue as they have begun". What misery to live in this world! We are like men whose enemies are at the door, who must not lay aside their arms, even while sleeping or eating, and are always in dread lest the foe should enter the fortress by some breach in the walls.

Give us, O our good Master, some safeguard against surprise in this most dangerous warfare![3] The weapons which we may use, Christians, and which His Majesty has given us, are love and fear. Love will quicken your footsteps, and fear will make you look where you set your foot down, lest you should trip against the many stumbling-blocks on that road by which all men must pass in this life. Thus armed, you will be secure from pitfalls.

The love and fear of God need not advertise themselves.[4]

[1] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. i.
[2] *Beatus vir qui timet Dominum* (Ps. xci 1).
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xl. [4] Ch. xli.

They are two strong fortresses, from whence war is waged on the world and the devils. Great pains are required in order to root this holy fear deeply in the soul, although, when a genuine love is felt for God, he soon gives it, seeing her firm determination not to commit even a venial sin for the sake of any created thing, and that not to avoid a thousand deaths would she offend him, although, in spite of this, such a one may fall into defects, for we are weak and cannot trust ourselves. The firmer are our resolutions, the less ought we to confide in our strength, for all our confidence must rest in God.

Second Point

The fear of God is easily recognized by its possessor and by those around him, although at first it is not strong enough to be perceived by everyone, but develops gradually.[1] I except the case of certain persons on whom, as I said, our Lord bestows such great favours that, in a short time, they become rich in virtues and are raised to a high degree of prayer. In their case this fear of God becomes at once apparent, otherwise it increases daily by degrees. This, and the love of God, are more plainly seen as they attain perfection, although the former virtue may soon be detected, because whoever owns it forsakes sin and its occasions, and gives up bad company; there are also other signs of it. But when souls are raised to contemplation, both their love and fear of God are very evident even in their outward conduct. Whoever watches such persons narrowly will find that they are never careless, for God upholds them, so that, whatever they might gain by it, they would not willingly commit a venial fault; as for mortal sin, they dread it like fire.

You see that, with these two things, the love and the fear of God, we can travel peacefully along the road without imagining that at every step we see some ditch to fall into. If we fancy this, we shall never get to the end of our journey, yet fear must always lead the way. Do not grow careless: we must never feel perfectly safe in this life. To do so

[1] Ch. xli.

would be most dangerous, as we cannot be absolutely sure whether we really possess this holy fear and love.

We notice that nothing in this life merits the name of evil in comparison with the great evil of sin, which delivers us over to evil which is eternal. This is what we must dread and pray God to deliver us from, for we are weakness itself, and "unless he guards the city, in vain shall we labour to defend it." [1]

Third Point

Still I must give a warning to the religious souls: be not too much confident because you are nuns and members of such or such an Order. [2] David was very holy, yet you know what Solomon became. Therefore rely not on your enclosure, on your penitential life, nor on your continual exercise of prayer and constant communion with God, nor trust in having left the world, nor in the idea that you hold its ways in horror. All this is good, but is not enough, as I have said, to remove all fear; therefore meditate on this text and often recall it: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord."

Believe me, the question is not whether we wear the religious habit or not, but whether we strive to practise the virtues and to submit our will in all things to the will of God. The object of our life must be to do what he requires of us: let us not ask that *our* will may done, but *his*. If we have not yet attained to this, let us be humble. Humility is the ointment for our wounds; if we have it, although perhaps he may defer his coming for a time, God, who is our physician, will come and heal us.

Let that one among you who feels most confidence on this point fear the most, for "Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord", as David said. [3] May His Majesty ever protect us! Let us beg him never to permit us to offend him: therein lies our greatest safety.

[1] *Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam* (Ps. cxxvi 1).

[2] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. i. [3] VIIth Mansion, ch. iv.

Colloquy

How sweet are thy ways, O Lord! yet who can travel by them without dread?[1] Fain would I give myself wholly to thy service, yet, looking on my misery, I see that I am incapable of good, unless thou dost first give it me. Oh, my merciful God! what shall I do not to render void thy great graces? Thy works are holy, just, priceless, full of sublimest wisdom, for thou, Lord, art wisdom itself. Yet, while my mind ponders over this, my will complains; it would have no hindrance to its loving thee, for in such high matters the intellect cannot attain to its God, yet longs to enjoy him, although it knows not how, while shut within the dreary prison of mortality.

Why do I say this, my God? To whom do I complain? Who hears me, but thou, my Father and my Creator? But why speak in order to tell thee of my pain, since I see so clearly that thou dost dwell within me? Behold my folly! But alas! my God, how can I be sure I am not separated from thee? Oh, my life, which shall be passed in such vital hazard, who could wish for thee? The sole gain to be found or hoped for in thee is to please God in all things, and even this is most uncertain and beset by dangers.

Resolution

Keep in mind your past life and present tepidity to obtain repentance; discover why you are unfit for heaven: you will thus live in fear, the source of great blessings.[2]

READING

Tokens of the Fear of God discerned by the Saint in her own Soul

"I bore all this[3] with great resignation, and if I except the beginning of my illness, with great joy; for all this was

[1] *Exclamations*, ii. [2] *Maxims*.
[3] She speaks of her illness, when a young nun at The Incarnation.

as nothing in comparison with the pains and tortures I had to bear at first. I was resigned to the will of God, even if he left me in this state forever. My anxiety about the recovery of my health seemed to be grounded on my desire to pray in solitude, as I had been taught; for there were no means of doing so in the infirmary. I went to Confession most frequently, spoke much about God, and in such a way as to edify everyone; and they all marvelled at the patience which our Lord gave me; for if it had not come from the hand of His Majesty, it seemed impossible to endure so great an affliction with so great a joy.

"It was a great thing for me to have had the grace of prayer which God had wrought in me; it made me understand what it is to love him. In a little while, I saw these virtues renewed within me; still they were not strong, for they were not sufficient to sustain me in justice. I never spoke ill in the slightest degree whatever of anyone, and my ordinary practice was to avoid all detraction; for I used to keep this resolution on all occasions; though not so perfectly, upon some great occasions that presented themselves, as not to break it sometimes. But my ordinary practice was this: and thus those who were about me, and those with whom I conversed, became so convinced that it was right, that they adopted it as a habit. It came to be understood that where I was, absent persons were safe; so they were also with my friends and kindred, and with those whom I instructed. Still, for all this, I have a strict account to give unto God for the bad example I gave in other respects. May it please His Majesty to forgive me. for I have been the cause of much evil; though not with intentions as perverse as were the acts that followed.

"The longing for solitude remained, and I loved to discourse and speak of God; for if I found anyone with whom I could do so, it was a greater joy and satisfaction to me than all the refinements—or rather, to speak more correctly, the real rudeness—of the world's conversation. I communicated and confessed more frequently still, and desired to do so; I was extremely fond of reading good books: I was most deeply penitent for having offended God; and I remember that very often I did not dare to pray, because I was afraid

of that most bitter anguish which I felt for having offended God, dreading it as a great chastisement.

"This grew upon me afterwards to so great a degree, that I know of no torment wherewith to compare it; and yet it was neither more nor less because of any fear I had at any time, for it came upon me only when I remembered the consolations of our Lord which he gave me in prayer, the great debt I owed him, the evil return I made: I could not bear it. I was extremely angry with myself on account of the many tears I shed for my faults, when I saw how little I improved, seeing that neither my good resolutions, nor the pains I took, were sufficient to keep me from falling whenever I had the opportunity. I looked on my tears as a delusion; and my faults, therefore, I regarded as the more grievous, because I saw the great goodness of our Lord to me in shedding of those tears, and together with them such deep compunction. I took care to go to Confession as soon as I could; and, as I think, did all that was possible on my part to return to a state of grace. But the whole evil lay in my not thoroughly avoiding the occasions of sin, and in my confessors, who helped me so little. If they had told me that I was travelling on a dangerous road, and that I was bound to abstain from those conversations, I believe, without any doubt, that the matter would have been remedied, because I could not bear to remain even for one day in mortal sin, if I knew it. All these tokens of the fear of God came to me through prayer; and the greatest of them was this, that fear was swallowed of love—for I never thought of chastisement." (*Life written by herself*, ch. v.)

FOURTH MEDITATION

DIVINE MERCY AND SORROW FOR SIN

PRELUDE.—Once, when I was in great distress for my offences against God, he said to me: "All thy sins in my sight are as if they were not." [1]

FIRST POINT

Let us, Christians, meditate on the infinite mercy and patience of God in not casting us down to hell at once when we sin, and let us render him hearty thanks. [2] As for me, I received a clear perception of the surpassing love of God for us, in that he forgives us all this when we turn to him. O my Redeemer, how oblivious are men of their own interest! Oh, how excessive is thy bounty! Thou who art ever mindful of us, when by our fall we have struck thee a mortal blow, dost forget it, and stretch forth thy hand anew to preserve us, recalling us from our hopeless frenzy to petition thee for health. Blessed be such a Master for his infinite mercy; may he be eternally praised for his tender compassion!

O my Jesus, what a sight that must be—a soul highly exalted by thee falling into sin, and raised up again by thee, who, in thy mercy, stretched forth thine hand to save! [3] How such a soul confesses thy greatness and compassion and its own wretchedness! It really looks on itself as nothingness, and confesses thy power. It dares not lift up its eyes; it raises them, indeed, but it is to acknowledge how much it owes to thee. It becomes devout to the Queen of Heaven, that she may propitiate thee; it invokes the Saints, who fell after thou hadst called them, for succour. Thou seemest now to be too bountiful in thy gifts, because it feels itself

[1] *Relations*, iii. [2] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch x.
[3] *Life*, ch. xiv.

to be unworthy of the earth it treads on. It has recourse to the Sacraments, to a quickened faith, which abides in it at the contemplation of the power which thou hast lodged in them. It praises thee because thou hast left us such medicines and ointment for our wounds, which not only heal them on the surface, but remove all traces whatever of them. The soul is amazed at it.

Second Point

Who is there, O Lord of my soul, that is not amazed at compassion so great and mercy so surpassing, after treason so foul and so hateful?[1] I know not how it is that my heart does not break when I write this, for I am wicked. With these scanty tears which I am now shedding, but yet thy gift—water out of a well, so far as it is mine, so impure—I seem to make thee some recompense for treachery so great as mine, in that I was always doing evil, labouring to make void the graces thou hadst given me. Do thou, O Lord, make my tears available, purify the water which is so muddy!

Is it possible, O Lord,[2] that there can be a soul which, after attaining to a state wherein thou bestowest upon it great graces and consolations, and wherein it understands that thou delightest to be with it, can yet fall back and offend thee after so many favours, and such great demonstrations of the love thou bearest it, and of which there cannot be any doubt, because the effect of it is so visible? Such a soul there certainly is; for I have done so not once, but often. May it please thy goodness, O Lord, that I may be alone in my ingratitude—the only one who has committed so great an iniquity, and whose ingratitude has been so immeasurable! But even out of my ingratitude thine infinite goodness has brought forth some good; and the greater my wickedness, the greater the splendour of the great mercy of thy compassion.

Let souls rely on the goodness of God, which is greater than all the evil we can do.[3] When we, acknowledging our own vileness, desire to return into his grace, he remembers

[1] *Life*, ch. xix. [2] Ch. xiv. [3] Ch. xix.

our ingratitude no more—no, not even the graces he has given us, for the purpose of chastising us, because of our misuse of them ; yea, rather they help to procure our pardon the sooner, as of persons who have been members of his household, and who, as they say, have eaten of his bread. Let them remember his words, and behold what he hath done unto me, who grew weary of sinning before he grew weary of forgiving. He is never weary of giving, nor can his compassion be exhausted. Let us not grow weary of receiving.

Third Point

On the other hand, sorrow for sin increases in proportion to the divine grace received, and I believe will never quit us until we come to the land where nothing can grieve us any more.[1] Doubtless we feel this pain more at one time than another, and it is of a different kind. A soul greatly advanced does not think of the punishment threatening its offences, but of its great ingratitude towards him to whom it owes so much and who so justly deserves that it should serve him, for the graces received have taught it much about the greatness of God.

This soul wonders at its former temerity and weeps over its irreverence ; its foolishness in the past seems a madness which it never ceases to lament as it remembers for what vile things it forsook so great a Sovereign. The thoughts dwell on this more than on the favours received, which are so powerful that they seem to rush through the soul at times like a strong, swift river. The sins, however, remain like the mire in the river bed, and dwell constantly in the memory, making a heavy cross to bear. I know someone who, though she wished for death in order to see God, yet desired it also that she might be freed from her continual regret for her past ingratitude towards him to whom she owed, and always would owe, so much. She thought no one's guilt could be compared to her own, for she felt there could be none with whom God had borne so patiently, nor on whom he had bestowed such graces.

[1] *Interior Castle,* VIth Mansion, ch. vii.

This pain is not lessened by reflecting that our Lord has already forgiven and forgotten our faults; our grief is rather increased at seeing such kindness and favours bestowed on one who deserves nothing but hell.

But I seem, O Lord,[1] to have forgotten all thy mighty works and mercies—how thou camest into the world for sinners' sakes, didst purchase us by such a precious ransom. . . . O Lord, Lord! all this does but embitter the grief of one who loves thee! My only consolation is to think of the eternal praise that will be rendered to thy mercy when my sins are revealed.

Colloquy

O Lord, let not a soul which thou hast purchased with so many labours be lost, one which thou hast so often ransomed anew, and delivered from between the teeth of the hideous dragon![2] Oh, what reasons have I to magnify thy mercies for ever! May it be so, I beseech thee, O my God, and may I sing of them for ever![3] Yet I know not if my grief will ever heal, until, on seeing thee, all the miseries of this mortal life shall vanish.

Hope in the Lord, my soul, because I will yet confess to him my sins and his mercies; of which I will make a song of praise, mingled with incessant sighs to him, my Saviour and my God.[4] It may be that a day will come when "my glory shall sing to him," and my conscience be not "troubled,"[5] where all weepings and fears shall be no more.

Resolution

Let the mercy of God reassure us, for he who has delivered us from so many sins will not withdraw his hand from under us and let us be lost.[6]

[1] *Exclamations*, iii.
[2] *Life*, ch. xiv.
[3] *Exclamations*, iii.
[4] *Exclamations*, xiv.
[5] *Ut cantet tibi gloria mea et non compungar* (Ps. xxix 13).
[6] *Life*, ch. xxxviii.

READING

How our Lord was pleased to renew in St Teresa Sorrow for Sin

"One night, when I was in prayer, our Lord spoke to me certain words, whereby he made me remember the great wickedness of my past life. They filled me with shame and distress; for though they were spoken with severity, they caused a feeling and a painfulness which were too much for me: and we feel that we make greater progress in the knowledge of ourselves when we hear one of these words, than we can make by a meditation of many days on our own misery, because these words impress the truth upon us at the same time in such a way that we cannot resist it.

"He set before me the former inclinations of my will to vanities, and told me to make much of the desire I now had that my will, which had been so ill employed, should be fixed on him, and that he would accept it.

"On other occasions he told me to remember how I used to think it an honourable thing to go against his honour; and, again, to remember my debt to him, for when I was most rebellious he was bestowing his graces upon me. If I am doing anything wrong—and my wrong doings are many—His Majesty makes me see it in such a way that I am utterly confounded; and as I do so often, that happens often also. I have been found fault with by my confessors occasionally; and on betaking myself to prayer for consolation, have received a real reprimand.

"To return to what I was speaking of. When our Lord made me remember my wicked life, I wept; for as I considered that I had never done any good, I thought he might be about to bestow upon me some special grace; because most frequently, when I receive any particular mercy from our Lord, it is when I have been previously greatly humiliated, in order that I may the more clearly see how far I am from deserving it. I think our Lord must do it for that end. Almost immediately after this I was so raised up in spirit

that I thought myself to be, as it were, out of the body; at least, I did not know that I was living in it. I had a vision of the most sacred Humanity in exceeding glory, greater than I had ever seen it in before. I beheld it in a wonderful and clear way in the bosom of the Father." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxiii.)

FOURTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

PRELUDE.—All I care for is that, as the enemies of God are so many and his friends so few, these latter might at least be good ones.[1]

FIRST POINT

O King of glory, and Lord of all things![2] Oh, how thy kingly dignity is not hedged about by trifles. Thy kingdom is for ever. The very vision of thy person shows us at once that thou alone art to be called Lord. Thy majesty is so manifest, that there is no need of a retinue or guard to make us confess that thou art King. An earthly king without attendance would be hardly acknowledged; and though he might wish ever so much to be recognized, people will not own him when he appears as others; it is necessary that his dignity should be visible, if people are to believe in it. This is reason enough why kings should affect so much state; for if they had none, no one would respect them; this their semblance of power is not in themselves, and their authority must come to them from others.

O my Lord! O my King! who can describe thy Majesty? It is impossible not to see that thou art thyself the great Ruler of all, that the beholding of thy Majesty fills men with awe. But I am filled with greater awe, O my Lord, when I consider thy humility, and the love thou hast for such as I am.

But, at the same time, O my Redeemer, how it wearies my heart to think of thy kingdom on earth, which is thy Church![3] To what a state have Christians come! Must those who owe thee most, always treat thee worst? Those souls, to whom thou hast shown the greatest goodness, whom thou hast chosen for thy friends, amongst whom thou dost dwell, to whom thou dost give thyself in thy Sacraments,

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. i.
[2] *Life*, ch. xxxvii.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. i.

Hast thou not borne torments enough at the hands of the Jews? The world is in a fever; men wish, as it were, to condemn Christ again, for they suborn a thousand false witnesses against him; they want to level the Church with the ground. This Lord of mine is attacked with such cruelty by those on whom he has conferred great benefits, that it seems as though they would fasten him to the Cross again, leaving him no place to lay his head.[1] O true Friend, how ill such traitors requite thee!

Second Point

Seeing so great evils and disasters, I think we should act as people do when, in time of war, the enemy has overrun the country and the king finds himself hard pressed.[2] He retires into a strongly fortified town from whence he sometimes makes a sortie. The small company with him in the citadel, being picked men, are better than a large army of cowardly soldiers; thus they often come off victors, or, at least, if not victors, they are not vanquished, for there is no traitor in their ranks and famine alone can conquer them. No famine can force us to surrender; it may kill us—it cannot vanquish us.

But how can we better use life and health than to lose them for so grand a King and Lord? Believe me, Christians, no harm will ever befall you if you travel on this road. I confess that my wickedness and weakness have put me very often in fear and doubt, but I cannot call to mind any occasion since our Lord gave me the habit of a barefooted Carmelite, nor for some years before, in which, of his mere compassion, he did not enable me by his grace to overcome these temptations and to venture upon that, however difficult it might be, which I understood to be for his greater glory. I see clearly that what I did myself was very little, but God asks no more than a resolution of this kind to do everything himself. May he be blessed and praised for ever! Amen.

[1] *Exclamations*, x. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. iii.
[3] *Foundations*, ch. xxviii.

Third Point

O Jesus Christ our Lord, King over all things, Son of the Everlasting Father, what hast thou left in this world for us thy children to inherit?[1] What were thy possessions? Only toil, and sorrow, and insult. Thou hadst nothing but the hard wood to rest on when undergoing the bitter anguish of death. Ah, my God, it is not fitting that we should run away from suffering if we would be thy children indeed, and not renounce the inheritance. Thine armorial bearings are five wounds; then Christians, that must be also our device if we are to inherit his kingdom. It is not ease, nor comfort, nor honours, nor riches that will obtain for us what he purchased by so much blood. O ye of noble birth, open your eyes for the love of God; behold the true soldiers of Jesus Christ and the princes of his Church. A St Peter, a St Paul, never travelled by your road. Perhaps you think that a new road has been made for you: believe it not.

Life lasts but two hours: the reward is immense, but even without that, by following the counsels of our Lord, the very imitating of His Majesty in any way would be an ample recompense.[2] Our Lord has taught me some of the benefits to be found in holy poverty, which those will discover who practise it. Poverty includes in itself all the world's goods; it is a vast domain. I dare to affirm that he who despises all earthly goods holds sway over them. Let us to this extent at least resemble our King. He had no home except the stable of Bethlehem where he was born, and the Cross where he died.

Colloquy

Thou hast been King, my God, from all eternity, for thine is no borrowed empire, but thine own, and it will never end.[3] Blessed mayest thou be! I always feel a peculiar joy at reciting in the Creed: "Of whose kingdom

[1] Ch. x.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. ii.
[3] Ch. xxii.

there shall be no end ".[1] I will praise and bless thee for ever, Lord, for thy kingdom shall last for ever.[2] Behold my life, behold my good name, behold my will; I have given them all to thee; I am thine: dispose of me according to thy will. I see well enough, O Lord, how little I can do; but now, having drawn near to thee—having ascended to this watch-tower, from which the truth may be seen—and while thou departest not from me, I can do all things; but if thou departest from me, were it but for a moment, I shall go thither where I was once—that is, to hell.

Resolution

Let us enter on the way of perfection,[3] resolved only on helping to carry the cross of Christ like good soldiers, willing to serve their King without present pay, because they are sure of it at last, having their eyes directed to the true and everlasting kingdom at the conquest of which we are aiming.

READING

St Teresa and her Daughters' Share in the Church's Struggle

"If a miracle is a fact which occurs out of the natural order, we are here in presence of so many extraordinary and new events, that to call them miracles is not enough; they form a succession of many miracles. It is a miracle that one woman alone brought back to perfection an Order composed of men and women: another miracle is the lofty perfection to which she led them: a third miracle is the stupendous growth attained in a few years by so small a beginning. All these facts deserve to be weighed separately.

"The part of woman being, as St Paul wrote, to be taught, and not to teach, it appears at first sight an unheard of wonder that a woman, weak by nature, could be so bold and

[1] *Et regni ejus non erit finis.*
[2] *Life*, ch. xxi. [3] Ch. xv.

courageous as to undertake such an enterprise, so wise and powerful as to realize it; to win hearts and give them to God, and to lead so many souls towards all that nature abhors. In our days, Satan seems to triumph, being followed by a multitude of heathen, favoured by many obstinate heretics and by a number of bad Catholics. Yet God, if I am not deceived, in order to humble and mock him, has chosen to oppose him, not a strong man with the prestige of learning, but a mere woman, and this woman was to challenge him, to lift up the standard against him, to gather a host destined to overcome him, to throw him down, to trample under foot. God has also ordained, in order to manifest his power, that at an epoch when his kingdom is oppressed by so many thousands of men, either by errors of mind or morals, that a woman should repair those ruins by enlightening or reforming an ever-growing multitude of persons. In fine, in this later age of the Church, he has been pleased to show us that his grace does not grow old, nor is it less powerful now than in the past, since by weaker instruments he performs works as great and of the same kind.

"In fact, and this is the second miracle, the life of your Reverences [1] and the perfection to which your Mother raised you, recall the sanctity of the primitive Church. Indeed, we see the past reproduced in your existence. Your life shows in practice that which seems to exist but in writing, so rare was it. We see what arouses our wonder, almost our incredulity, practised by your Reverence and their companions.

"Detached from all that is not God, longing but for the embraces of the divine Spouse, closely united with him, with the soul of a man in the delicate body of a woman, you reduce to practice the most lofty and generous philosophy ever conceived by man. You attain by deeds a point of perfection and heroism that the imagination of the men of genius scarcely reached. In very truth you tread riches under foot, you hate freedom, you despise dignities, love humility and labour; your only study is holy emulation to progress

[1] The epistle is addressed to the discalced Carmelite nuns of Madrid.

continually in virtue. And your Spouse answers you by infusing into your souls so plentiful a joy that though deprived of all the comforts of life, you possess a treasure of happiness, and we see you trampling on nature, as if you were free from its laws, or, better still, had risen above them.

"You are neither wearied by labour nor straitened by enclosure, cast down by illness nor even frightened by death, which, on the contrary, cheers and rejoices you. Most wonderful of all is your aptitude and delight in difficult matters. In fact, mortification is your pleasure, resignation your relief, the most severe penance your entertainment. What alarms nature is trifling or refreshing to you. The virtues are to you a pleasant pastime.

"Hence you verify the truth of the words of Christ: 'My yoke is sweet and my burden light.'[1] Indeed, no worldly woman feels such pleasure in adorning herself as you find in leading an angelical life. Angels indeed you are, not merely by the perfection of your life, but by the conformity and union which prevail amongst you. No two things so resemble one another as you do in language, modesty, humility, patience, sweetness; in short, in your whole conduct and exterior. Animated with the same virtue, you bear a similar physiognomy, and each, like a mirror, reflects the same features: those of the Holy Mother who lives anew in her daughters.

"But her daughters are not mere pictures of her features. They are evident testimonies of her perfection.

"These perfections communicated to you all have spread so rapidly, that in the space of twenty years or so which have elapsed since the Mother founded her first convent—and this is the third miracle—Spain has been covered with religious houses, wherein God is served by more than a thousand friars and nuns. Amongst these the nuns sparkle like planets amidst the stars. As a holy woman started this reformation, so women seem still to keep the lead in it.

"Not only are they lights and models in their own Order, but they prove to be the honour of our nation, the glory of

[1] *Jugum meum suave est et onus meum leve.*

our era, magnificent flowers beautifying the barrenness of the century in which we live. In truth, they are among the choicest members of the Holy Church, living testimonies of the efficacity of the grace of Christ, proofs of its sovereign virtue, perfect types exemplifying that which faith promises." (*Extracted from a letter of Fray Luis de Leon, which is printed at the beginning of the first edition of St Teresa's writings.*)

SECOND MEDITATION

COURAGEOUS RESOLUTIONS

PRELUDE.—Let the Christian be valiant ; let him not be like those who lay down to drink from the brook when they went to battle with Gedeon.[1] Let him resolve to go forth to combat with the host of demons, and be convinced that there is no better weapon than the Cross.

FIRST POINT

We are starting on the heavenly road that leads to Paradise.[2] This journey gains such vast treasures that no wonder the cost should seem dear. Some day we shall discover that all we have paid was nothing compared with the prize it has purchased for us. We are of those who wish to travel by this path to the very end. How must we begin? I maintain that this is the chief point ; in fact, that everything depends on having a great and most resolute determination never to halt until they reach their journey's end, happen what may, whatever the consequences are, cost what it will, let who will blame them, whether they reach the goal, or die on the road, or lose heart to bear the trials they encounter, or the earth itself goes to pieces beneath their feet.

A reason why our resolution should be firm is that this lessens the devil's power of tempting us.[3] He is very frightened of determined souls, knowing by experience how they injure him, and that, by trying to do them mischief, he only profits them and others, and damages himself. Still, we must not grow careless, or trust to this, for we have to deal with traitors who, though too cowardly to attack the wary, yet inflict great harm on the negligent. If they find that a soul is fickle, irresolute, and wanting in perseverance

[1] *Interior Castle*, IInd Mansion.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxi.
[3] *Life*, ch. xxiii

in the right path, they will never leave it alone day or night, and will suggest to it endless fears and difficulties. Experience has convinced me of this, and I have been able to explain it to you : most people do not realize its gravity.

Second Point

Another and very weighty reason is that a resolute soul fights more courageously, knowing that, come what may, it must never retreat.[1] It is like a soldier in the midst of the fray, who knows that if he is vanquished he must expect no quarter, but that, if he does not fall during the battle, he will be killed afterwards. I am sure that he must fight the more doggedly and intend to sell his life the more dearly for this, as the term goes. Besides, he would care less for his wounds, realizing the price of victory and that his life depended upon gaining it.

We ought to feel no doubt that, unless we allow ourselves to be defeated, we are sure to succeed. This is certain, for, however insignificant our conquest may be, we shall come off with great gains.

I can assure you, I never saw one of those courageous souls lag behind on the road ; and never a cowardly soul, though under pretence of humility, make that progress in many years which the former make in a few.[2] I am astonished at the great things done on this road by encouraging oneself to undertake great things, though we may not have the strength for them at once ; the soul takes a flight upwards and ascends high, though, like a little bird whose wings are weak, it grows weary and rests.

At one time I used often to think of those words of St Paul : " That all things are possible in God."[3] I saw clearly that of myself I could do nothing. This was of great service to me. So also was the saying of St Augustine : " Give me, O Lord, what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt."[4] I was often thinking how St. Peter lost nothing by

[1] *Life*, ch. xxiii. [2] *Life*, ch. xiii [3] *Omnia possum in Eo qui me confortat* (Phil. iv 23). [4] *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis* (*Confessions*, x 29).

throwing himself into the sea, though he was afterwards afraid.[1]

Third Point

Take no notice, Christians, of the warnings people give you, or the dangers they suggest.[2] It is absurd to suppose that one can travel along a road full of bandits to reach a costly treasure without running any risks. Men of the world think happiness consists in journeying peacefully through life, yet for the sake of gaining a farthing they will sacrifice their sleep night after night, and leave other people no peace of mind or body. If, when you are trying to earn, or "bear away" this treasure for yourselves—for, as our Lord says, "The violent bear it away"[3]—and are travelling by the royal and safe road by which our Lord, all the elect, and the saints passed—if, even then, men warn you of so many dangers, so many horrors, what must be the risks incurred by those who seek these riches with no path to guide them? O Christians! there can be no comparison between the hazard of these travellers and your own. Yet such souls never realize this until they fall headlong into peril, with no one to help them out of it.

Therefore, banish these misgivings: take no notice of public opinion. This is no time to believe everything you hear. Be guided only by those who conform their lives to that of Christ; try to keep a good conscience; practise humility; despise all earthly things; firmly believe the teaching of our holy Mother the Church—then you may feel sure you are on the right road. If His Majesty is pleased with you, whoever resists you—be he who he may—will be utterly disappointed.[4]

Colloquy

May it be thy good pleasure, O my God, that the time may come in which I may be able to pay one farthing, at

[1] Matt. xiv 30. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxi.
[3] *Violenti rapiunt illud* (Matt. xi 12). [4] *Life*, ch. xxvi.

least, of the heavy debt I owe thee![1] Do thou, O Lord, dispose matters according to thy will, that this thy servant may do thee some service. Other women there have been who did heroic deeds for thee; I am good only to talk; and so it has not been thy pleasure, O my God, that I should do anything: all ends in talk and desires—that is all my service. And yet even in this I am not free, because it is possible I might fail altogether. Strengthen thou my soul, and prepare it, O Good of all goods; and, my Jesus, then ordain thou the means whereby I may do something for thee, so that there may be not even one who can bear to receive so much, and make no payment in return. Cost what it may, O Lord, let me not come before thee with hands so empty, seeing that the reward of everyone will be according to his works.

Resolution

Often renew the resolution never to halt until we reach our journey's end.[2]

READING

Examples of Courageous Resolutions related by the Saint

"I see this generosity in certain persons of tender years who have come to this monastery—God touches their hearts and gives them a little light and love. I speak of that brief interval in which he gives them sweetness in prayer, and then they wait for nothing further, and make light of every difficulty, forgetting the necessity even of food; for they shut themselves up for ever in a house that is unendowed, as persons who make no account of their life, for his sake, who they know loves them. They give up everything, even their own will; and it never enters their mind that they might be discontented in so small a house, and where enclosure is so strictly observed. They offer themselves wholly in sacrifice to God.

[1] *Life* ch. xxi

[2] *Life* ch.

"Oh, how willingly do I admit that they are better than I am: and how I ought to be ashamed of myself before God. What His Majesty has not been able to accomplish in me in so many years—it is long ago since I began to pray, and he to bestow his graces upon me—he accomplished in them in three months, and in some of them even in three days, though he gives them much fewer graces than he gave to me: and yet His Majesty rewards them well; most assuredly they are not sorry for what they have done for him.

"I wish, therefore, we reminded ourselves of those long years which have gone by since we made our religious profession. I say this to those persons also who have given themselves long ago to prayer, but not for the purpose of distressing those who in a short time have made greater progress than we have made, by making them retrace their steps, so that they may proceed only as we do ourselves. We must not desire those who, because of the graces God has given them, are flying like eagles, to become like chickens whose feet are tied. Let us rather look to His Majesty, and give these souls the reins, if we see that they are humble; for our Lord, who has had such compassion upon them, will not let them fall into the abyss.

"These souls trust themselves in the hands of God, for the truth which they learn by faith helps them to do so; and shall not we also trust them to him, without seeking to measure them by our measure, which is that of our meanness of spirit? We must not do it, for if we cannot ascend to the heights of their great love and courage, without experience none can comprehend them; for by this seeming regard of their progress we hinder our own, and miss the opportunity our Lord gives to humble ourselves, to ascertain our own shortcomings, and learn how much more detached and more near to God these souls must be than we are, seeing that His Majesty draws so near to them himself.

"I have no other intention here, and I wish to have no other, than to express my preference for the prayer that in a short time results in these great effects, which show themselves at once; for it is impossible they should enable us to leave all things only to please God, if they were not accompanied with a vehement love. I would rather have that

prayer than that which lasted many years, but which at the end of the time, as well as at the beginning, never issued in a resolution to do anything for God, with the exception of some trifling services, like a grain of salt, without weight or bulk, and which a bird might carry away in its mouth. Is it not a serious and mortifying thought that we are making much of certain services which we render our Lord, but which are too pitiable to be considered, even if they are many in number? This is my case, and I forget every moment the mercies of our Lord. I do not mean that His Majesty will not make much of them himself, for he is good; but I wish I made no account of them myself, or even perceived that I did them, for they are nothing worth.

"But, O my Lord, do thou forgive me, and blame me not, if I try to console myself a little with the little I do, seeing that I do not serve thee at all; for if I rendered thee any great services, I should not think of these trifles. Blessed are they who serve thee in great deeds; if envying these, and desiring to do what they do, were of any help to me, I should not be so far behind them as I am in pleasing thee; but I am nothing worth, O my Lord; do thou make me of some worth, thou who lovest me so much." (*Life by herself*, ch. xxxix.)

THIRD MEDITATION

THE DIVINE WORD INCARNATE FOR MAN'S SAKE

PRELUDE —Once, with that presence of the three Persons which I have in my soul,[1] I was in a light so clear that no doubt of the presence of the true and living God was possible; and I came to the knowledge of things which afterwards I could not speak of. One of these things was how the person of the Son only took human flesh.[2] I know well that the Three were there when that marvellous work was done. All my thinking thereon comes at once to this: that I see God is almighty, that he has done what he would, and so can do what he will.

FIRST POINT

Our Lord said:[3] "No man cometh to the Father but by me"[4] and: "He that seeth me seeth the Father also."[5] If we never look at him and reflect on what we owe him for having died for us, I do not understand how we can know him, or perform good deeds in his service.[6] The holy Simeon, while bearing in his arms the glorious Infant, poor and wrapped in swaddling-clothes and followed by a procession of only two attendants, might more easily have taken Christ for the child of indigent parents than for the Son of the heavenly Father. But the Babe himself gave the old man light to recognize him.

My divine Master told me one day: "Thou seest, my daughter, how my whole life was full of dolours, and only on Mount Tabor hast thou heard of me in glory. Do not suppose, when thou seest my Mother hold me in her arms, that she had that joy unmixed with heavy sorrows. From

[1] *Relations*, ix. [2] *Relations*, v.
[3] *Interior Castle*, IInd Mansion.
[4] *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me* (Joan. xi 6).
[5] *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem (ibid. 9)*.
[6] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxii.

the time that Simeon spoke to her, my Father made her see in clear light all I had to suffer."[1] Oh, really we do not dwell in such misery, sufferings and poverty as did His Majesty.[2] He himself said to me another day: "Look at me, poor and despised of men."[3] And more, as if exclaiming: "Oh, covetousness of the human race, thinking that even the whole earth is too little for it! how often have I slept in the open air, because I had no place to shelter me!"

Second Point

What was the whole life of our Lord but a continuous death? for his bitter Passion was always before his eyes.[4] Yet this was the least of his sorrows compared with witnessing the sins committed against his Father and the multitude of souls that are lost. For if this is a cruel torment to a heart filled with charity, what must it have been to the boundless and supreme charity of our Lord?

I have often meditated on this,[5] and I know that the torture a friend of mine[6] has felt and still feels at seeing our Lord sinned against is so unbearable that she would far rather die than continue in such anguish. Then I thought that if a soul whose charity is so weak compared to that of Christ's—indeed, in comparison with his, this charity might be said not to exist—experiences this insufferable grief, what must have been the feelings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and what must his life have been? for all things were present before his eyes and he was the constant witness of the great offences committed against his Father. I believe, without doubt, that this pained him far more than his sacred Passion. There, at least, he found the end of all his trials, while his agony was allayed by the consolation of gaining our salvation through his death, and of proving how he loved his Father by suffering for him. Thus, people who, urged by fervent love, perform great penances, hardly

[1] *Spiritual Relation,* iv.
[2] *Way of Perfection,* ch. xlii.
[3] *Spiritual Relation,* iii.
[4] *Way of Perfection,* ch xlii.
[5] *Interior Castle,* Vth Mansion, ch. ii.
[6] The Saint herself.

feel them, but want to do still more, and count even that for little.

What, then, must His Majesty have felt at thus publicly manifesting his perfect obedience to his Father and his love for his brethren? What joy to suffer in doing God's will! Yet I think the constant sight of the many sins committed against God and of the numberless souls on their way to hell must have caused him such anguish, that had he not been more than man, one day of such torment would have destroyed not only his life, but many more lives, had they been his.

Third Point

Once, for more than an hour, our Lord was showing me wonderful things.[1] He seemed as if he would not leave me. He said to me: "See, my daughter, what they lose who are against me, do not fail to tell them of it." Another day I had a vision of the most sacred Humanity in exceeding glory. I beheld it in a wonderful and clear way in the bosom of the Father. I cannot tell how it was, for I saw myself, without seeing, as it seemed to me, in the presence of God. My amazement was such that I remained, as I believe, some days before I could recover myself. I had continually before me, as present, the majesty of the Son of God, though not so distinctly as in the vision.

I have had this vision on three other occasions, and it is, I think, the highest vision of all the visions which our Lord in his mercy showed me. The fruits of it are the very greatest, for it seems to purify the soul in a wonderful way, and destroy, as it were utterly, altogether, the strength of our sensual nature. It is a grand flame of fire, which seems to burn up and annihilate all the desires of this life.

At the beginning of my spiritual life, I was able to think of Christ only as man.[2] But so it was, and I never could form any image of him to myself, though I read much of his beauty, and looked at pictures of him. I was like one who is blind, or in the dark, who, though speaking to a person

[1] *Life*, Ch. xxxviii. [2] *Life*, ch. ix.

present, and feeling his presence, because he knows for certain that he is present—I mean that he understands him to be present and believes it—yet does not see him. It was thus with me when I used to think of our Lord.

What a joy to look at the likeness of Christ, who has given us such cause to love him![1] To gaze on his picture rouses the soul to fervour. And I should like to see his image wherever I turn my eyes. What can we look on that is better or more delightful than him who loves us so tenderly and who comprises in himself all good things?

Colloquy

Blessed, oh blessed for ever mayest thou be, my God?[2] May all things praise thee without end, O Lord, for thou art infinite. Rejoice, my soul, that there is One who loves thy God as he deserves, who knows his goodness and perfections; thank him for having given us on earth One who knows him as does his only begotten Son. Under his protection, thou canst approach His Majesty and beseech him, since he delights himself in thee, to let no earthly thing prevent thy delighting in him, and rejoicing in the perfections of thy God and in the thought that he deserves to be loved and praised. Beg him to aid thee to further, in some small degree, the glory of his Name, that thou mayest truly say: "My soul does magnify" and praise "the Lord."[3]

Resolution

Offer all things to the Eternal Father in union with the merits of his Son Jesus Christ.[4]

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiv.
[2] *Exclamations*, vii.
[3] *Magnificat anima mea Dominum* (Luc. i 46).
[4] *Maxims*.

READING

St Teresa's Devotion to Pictures of our Lord as Man, and how she celebrated His feasts

"It would be very helpful," she wrote, "if you wore a medal or some picture of our Lord that pleases you. Do not merely hang it round your neck never to look at it, but often speak to it: he will teach you what to say.

"Behold what happened to myself. I had read in a book that it was an imperfection to possess pictures well painted, and I would not, therefore, retain in my cell one that I had; also before I had read this, I thought it was poverty to possess none, except those made of paper—and as I read this afterwards, I would not have any other material. I learnt from our Lord, when I was not thinking at all about this, what I am going to say: 'This mortification was not right. Which is better: poverty or charity? But as love was the better, whatever kindled love in me, that I must not give up, nor take away from my nuns; for the book spoke of much adorning and curious devices—not of pictures. Satan among the Lutherans was taking away all those means by which their love might be the more quickened; and thus they were going to perdition. Those who are loyal to me, my daughter, must now, more than ever, do the very reverse of what they do.

"Our holy Mother," Sister Isabel Baptist stated, "showed the utmost devotion in celebrating the feasts of Christ our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the Saints, especially of St Joseph and St Mary Magdalen. The chapel was hung on those days with tapestries, flowers were placed on the altar and perfumes were burnt to excite the devotion of the people who visited the place and to incite them to celebrate the festivals devoutly.

"In order to celebrate the season and increase her daughters' spiritual joy, she used to compose verses in honour of our Lord and the Saints to be sung in the hermitages. She kept Christmas with special solemnity and fervour.

A procession carrying statues of our Lady and St Joseph was made throughout the convent. She taught the senior nuns to sing the canticles composed by her with the refrain:

Awake ! my sisters,
For behold there comes
The virgin who brought forth as son her God !

Overflowing with devotion and joy, she used to beg the sisters to grant hospitality to the divine Child, his Mother and her spouse St Joseph, to whom she was especially devoted.

"I know from a trustworthy religious[1] that our Mother, when at Malagon one Christmas night, was greatly grieved at the omission by the prioress of this devotion which she had always cherished."

[1] Very likely the Blessed Ann of St Bartholomew

FOURTH MEDITATION

THE TWO STANDARDS

PRELUDE.—Christians, it is time to defend your King and to rally round him in his utter abandonment; few are his faithful subjects, and many the followers of Lucifer.[1]

FIRST POINT

How is this, my only Good?[2] How is this? Is not the captain whom men follow in his war against thee thy vassal? And he dwells in unquenchable flames; how can he rise up against thee? How can the vanquished inspire courage? His poverty is extreme, for he is deprived of the riches of heaven; why, then, do men follow him? What can he give, who owns nothing but sufferings? How can it be, my God? Why is it, my Creator? Why do men, cowed by the devil, defy *Thee*? Even if, O my Lord, thou hadst not aided thine own—even if we owed some debt of gratitude to this prince of darkness, should we not compare the joys thou hast in store for us with the false and treacherous promises of the evil one? He has betrayed *thee*; what will he do to us?

Alas, what utter blindness, my God! what revolting ingratitude, my King! What hopeless madness to use thy very gifts to serve Satan! to requite thy tender love for us by loving one who hates thee, and will hate thee to eternity. Thou sheddest all thy blood for us; didst suffer stripes, and agony and torturing anguish! And we, instead of avenging thy heavenly Father for the flagrant injuries done to thee, his Son—for thou thyself didst take no vengeance on thine enemies, but didst ever pardon them—yet choose, as friends and companions, the very men who treated thee so barbarously, since we follow their infernal leader. Surely we shall be of their company and share their fate, unless thy mercy brings us to reason and forgives the past.

[1] *Exclamations*, x. [2] *Exclamations*, xii.

Second Point

O God of my soul![1] how eager are we to offend thee, yet how far more eager art thou to forgive us![2] Why, Lord, are we so foolishly presumptuous, unless because, knowing thy great mercy, we forget the strictness of thy justice? "The pains of death have encompassed me."[3] How thy tormentors surround thee still, my God! Where canst thou turn to be free from them? From every quarter they deal thee mortal blows.

Why, O my God, source of all my strength, are we always cowards, except in rebelling against thee? To this do the sons of Adam direct all their energies. Were not their reason blinded, they would never dare to combine the strength of the whole human race in taking arms and waging war against him who in an instant could hurl them down to the bottomless abyss. With minds obscured, they resemble madmen, who, bent on their own destruction, imagine they will thus gain new life—in short, they are beside themselves.

What cure is there, my God, for such frenzy? Men say that madness increases strength. So it is with men who revolt against God: feeble as they may be, all their fury is spent on thee, their greatest Benefactor. O incomprehensible wisdom! Thou needest all thy love for creatures to bear with such folly, and to wait until we return to our senses, while by a thousand arts and remedies thou art striving to bring about our cure.

Third Point

How marvellous, that though we lack resolution to conquer self in trivial matters, and persuade ourselves that, even if we try, we cannot avoid some occasion of sin, or some danger by which we risk eternal perdition, yet we have the audacity to affront such sovereign majesty as thine!

[1] *Exclamations*, x
[2] *Exclamations*, xii.
[3] *Circumdederunt me dolores mortis* (Ps. cxiv 3).

Return, ye children of men, return to your senses! Gaze on your King, while yet he is meek; cease from such sin and spend your fury and your strength on him who wars against you to rob you of your inheritance. For the love of God, reflect that you are aiming, with all your might, at slaying him who lost his life to save yours, who is your Defender against your enemies! If this is not enough, let it suffice to know that you are helpless against his power; sooner or later you must atone for your insults and blasphemy in everlasting flames.

O my God! how thou hast suffered for those who grieve so little for thy pain! The day will come, Lord, when thy justice will be made manifest, and men will discover that it equals thy mercy. Mark that, Christians! Deeply as we may reflect upon it, never shall we realize how much we owe our Lord God and how magnificent are his mercies. But, if his justice is as great, alas, alas! what will be their fate who deserve its being carried out and exemplified in them?

Colloquy

Now, my soul, the standard of Christ is to be raised up aloft,[1] which is nothing else but the carrying up of the Captain of the fort to the highest tower of it, there to raise up the standard of God. In this place of safety, look down on those below; fear no dangers—yea, rather, court them, as assured beforehand of victory. What power is thine, when looking down upon everything, being entangled with nothing! Be ashamed of the time when thou wast entangled! Be amazed at thy own blindness! Pity those who are still in darkness. Cry out to them, that they might be made to see the delusions they are in.

Resolution

The devils seem to me such cowards, for their strength fails them at the sight of anyone who despises them.[2] Let us embrace the cross and set about the service of God in earnest.

[1] *Life* ch. xx. [2] *Life*, ch. xxv.

READING

APPARITIONS OF SATAN TO ST TERESA

"I was once in an oratory, when Satan in an abominable shape appeared on my left hand. I looked at his mouth in particular, because he spoke and it was horrible. A huge flame seemed to issue out of his body. perfectly bright, without any shadow. He spoke in a fearful way, and said to me that, though I had escaped from his hands, he would yet lay hold of me again. I was in great terror, made the sign of the cross as well as I could, and then the form vanished—but it reappeared instantly. This occurred twice. I did not know what to do ; there was some holy water at hand; I took some, and threw it in the direction of the figure, and then Satan never returned.

"On another occasion, I was tortured for five hours with such terrible pains, such inward and outward sufferings, that it seemed to me as if I could not bear them. Those who were with me were frightened ; they knew not what to do ; and I could not help myself. I am in the habit, when these pains and my bodily sufferings are most unendurable, of making interior acts as well as I can, imploring our Lord, if it be his will, to give me patience, and then to let me suffer on even to the end of the world. So, when I found myself suffering so cruelly, I relieved myself by making those acts and resolutions, in order that I might be able to endure the pain. It pleased our Lord to make me understand that it was the work of Satan ; for I saw him close beside me, gnashing his teeth in despair at losing where he attempted to gain. When I saw him, I laughed and had no fear, for there were some who were then present who were helpless, and knew of no means whereby so great a pain could be relieved. My body, head and arms were violently shaken ; I could not help myself ; but the worst of all was the interior pain, for I could find no ease in any way. Nor did I dare to ask for holy water, lest those who were with me should be afraid and find out what the matter really was.

"I know by frequent experience that there is nothing which puts the devils to flight like holy water. They run away before the sign of the cross also, but they return

immediately: great then must be the power of holy water. As for me, my soul is conscious of a special and most distinct consolation whenever I take it. Indeed, I feel almost always a certain refreshing, which I cannot describe, together with an inward joy, which comforts my whole soul. This is no fancy nor a thing which has occurred once only; for it has happened very often, and I have watched it very carefully. I may compare what I feel with that which happens to a person in great heat, and very thirsty, drinking a cup of cold water—his whole being is refreshed. I consider that everything ordained by the Church is very important; and I have a joy in reflecting that the words of the Church are so mighty, that they endow water with power, so that there shall be so great a difference between holy water and water that has never been blessed.

"Then, as my pains did not cease, I told them that, if they would not laugh, I would ask for some holy water. They brought me some and sprinkled me with it; but I was no better. I then threw some myself in the direction of the negro, when he fled in a moment. All my sufferings ceased, just as if someone had taken them away from me with his hand; only I was wearied as if I had been beaten with many blows. It was of great service to me to learn that if, by our Lord's permission, Satan can do so much evil to a soul and body not in his power, he can do much more when he has them in his possession. It gave me a renewed desire to be delivered from a fellowship so dangerous." (*Life by herself*, ch. xxxi.)

FIFTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

PRELUDE.—Often have I thought of the woman of Samaria, and how often of the living water of which our Lord spoke to her.[1] That Gospel has an attraction for me; and, indeed, so it had even when I was a little child, though I did not understand it then as I do now.[2] I used to pray much to our Lord for that living water; and I had always a picture of it, representing our Lord at the well, with this inscription: *Domine, da mihi aquam.*[3]

FIRST POINT

I can find no simile more appropriate than water by which to explain spiritual things, as I am very ignorant and have poor wits to help me.[4] Besides, I love this element so much that I have studied it more attentively than other things. God, who is so great, so wise, has doubtless hidden secrets in all things he created which we should greatly benefit by knowing, as those say who understand such matters.

So far as I can remember, water has three properties which suit my comparison of the living water from the celestial fountain.[5] One property is that it cools other things. However warm anyone may be, he is cooled by plunging into a river. A second property is the cleansing of what is foul. What would become of mankind with no water to wash with?[6] The third property is to satisfy and quench thirst. This living, celestial water is limpid, undisturbed, and unmixed with any earthly matter, for it has come

[1] *Concept.*, Ch. vii. [2] *Life*, ch. xxx. [3] Joan. iv 15.
[4] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. ii.
[5] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxx. [6] Ch. xix.

straight from heaven. The soul which has once drunk of it is cleansed and left pure and free from all sins.

Remember, our Lord invited "any man"; he is truth itself; his words cannot be doubted. As he said unconditionally, "If any man thirst, let him come to me," I feel sure that, unless they stop half-way, none will fail to drink of this living water. May our Lord, who has promised to grant it, give us grace to seek it as we ought, for his own sake.

I repeat that his mercy is so great that he hinders no one from drinking of the fountain of life.[1] Indeed, he calls us loudly and publicly to do so.

Second Point

Oh! how great are the benefits of drinking of this fountain of living water![2] Do not be dismayed at the hardships and difficulties of the way; be courageous and do not grow weary, lest, when you have reached the spring and only have to stoop to drink of it, you may draw back and forfeit all this grace, imagining that you lack the strength to gain it, and that it is not meant for you.

Our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, promising that whoever drank of the living fountain of water should never thirst again. How true is this which was told us by Truth itself, for the soul thirsts no more for the things of this world, although its craving for the next life exceeds any natural thirst that can be imagined. Yet, how the heart pines for this thirst, realizing its priceless value! This drought brings its own remedy with it; it allays all desire for created things, but satisfies the soul. When it has been satiated by God, one of the greatest graces he can bestow on the spirit is to leave it with this thirst, which, after drinking, increases the longing to partake again and again of this water. O Lord! happy is the soul plunged so deeply into this living water as to die of it!

[1] Ch. xx. [2] Ch. xix.

Third Point

Take my advice, Christian souls,[1] and let no one mislead you by pointing out another way to reach this fountain than prayer.[2] Then try to remove from people you see any fear they may feel of beginning. I ask you, for the love of God, always to make your conversation helpful to your neighbour.

How the woman of Samaria must have been intoxicated with this draught![3] And how well her heart must have mastered our Lord's teaching, since she actually left him that she might profit her fellow-citizens by winning them to him! How this striking instance enforces the reality of what I have described! In return for her fervent charity, her neighbours believed her words, and she witnessed the great good that Christ worked in her town. I think that to see souls helped by our means must be one of the greatest joys in this world; then it is, as it appears to me, that we eat the most delicious fruit of the mystic flowers. Blessed are the souls on whom our Lord bestows these graces! How strictly they are bound to serve him!

This holy Samaritan, divinely inebriated as she was, cried aloud as she passed through the streets. I am surprised at men's believing her, for she was only a woman and must have belonged to the lower classes, as she went to fetch water herself. She was, indeed, most humble, for when our Lord told her of her sins, she showed no such resentment as the world does nowadays, when people can hardly endure to hear the truth, but she told him that he must be a prophet. In fact, her neighbours believed her word, and, with no other evidence, large numbers flocked out of the town to see our Lord.

Colloquy

O compassionate and tender Sovereign of my soul,[4] who dost say: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me, and I will give him to drink." O Life, who givest life to all! refuse

[1] Ch. xxi
[2] Ch. xx.
[3] *Concept.*, ch. vii
[4] *Exclamations*, ix.

not this most delicious water, promised by thee to all who desire it. Behold, I long for it, Lord; I ask for it, I come to thee! Hide not this water from me: thou knowest how I need it, since it is the only cure for a soul wounded by thee.

Resolution

Consider often how beneficial it is to drink of the fountain of living water, to prevent your being dismayed at the hardships of the way.[1]

READING

Watering of the Spiritual Garden

"Let us now see," the Saint says, "how this garden is to be watered, that we may understand what we have to do: how much trouble it will cost us, whether the gain be greater than the trouble, or how long a time it will take us. It seems to me that the garden may be watered in four ways: with water taken out of a well, which is very laborious; or with water raised by means of an engine and buckets, drawn by a windlass—I have drawn it this way sometimes; it is a less troublesome way than the first, and gives more water; or by a stream or brook, whereby the garden is watered in a much better way, for the soil is more thoroughly saturated, and there is no necessity to water it often, and the labour of the gardener is much less; or by showers of rain, when our Lord himself waters it, without labour on our part, and this way is incomparably better than all the others of which I have spoken. Now, then, for the application of these four ways of irrigation by which the garden is to be maintained; for without water it must fail.

"Of those who are beginners in prayer, we may say that they are those who draw the water out of the well—a process which, as I have said, is very laborious; for they must be wearied in keeping the senses recollected, and this is a great labour, because the senses have been hitherto accustomed

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xix.

to distractions. It is necessary for beginners to accustom themselves to disregard what they hear or see, and to put it away from them during the time of prayer; they must be alone, and in retirement think over their past life. All must do this many times, beginners as well as those more advanced; all, however, must not do so equally, as I shall show hereafter. Beginners at first suffer much, because they are not convinced that they are penitent for their sins; and yet they are, because they are so sincerely resolved on serving God. They must strive to meditate on the life of Christ, and the understanding is wearied thereby. Thus far we can advance of ourselves—that is, by the grace of God—for without that, as everyone knows, we never can have one good thought.

"This is beginning to draw water up out of the well. God grant there may be water in it! That, however, does not depend on us; we are drawing it, and doing what we can towards watering the flowers. So good is God, that when, for reasons known to His Majesty—perhaps for our greater good—it is his will the well should be dry, he himself preserves the flowers without water—we, like good gardeners, doing what lies in our power—and makes our virtues grow. By water here I mean tears, and if there be none, then tenderness and an inward feeling of devotion.

"Having spoken of the toilsome efforts and of the strength required for watering the garden when we have to draw the water out of the well, let us now speak of the second manner of drawing the water, which the Lord of the vineyard has ordained; of the machine of wheel and buckets whereby the gardener may draw more water with less labour, and be able to take some rest without being continually at work. This, then, is what I am now going to describe; and I apply it to the prayer called the prayer of quiet.

"Herein the soul begins to be recollected; it is now touching on the supernatural—for it never could by any efforts of its own attain to this. True, it seems at times to have been wearied at the wheel, labouring with the understanding, and filling the buckets, but in this second degree the water is higher, and accordingly the labour is much less than it was when the water had to be drawn out of the

well; I mean, that the water is nearer to it, for grace reveals itself more distinctly to the soul.

"Everything that takes place now in this state brings the very greatest consolation; and the labour is so slight, that prayer, even if persevered in for some time, is never wearisome. The reason is, that the understanding is now working very gently, and is drawing very much more water than it drew out of the well. The tears which God now sends, flow with joy; though we feel them, they are not the result of any efforts of our own.

"This water of grand blessings and graces, which our Lord now supplies, makes the virtues thrive much more, beyond all comparison, than they did in the previous state of prayer; for the soul is already ascending out of its wretched state, and some little knowledge of the blissfulness of glory is communicated to it. This, I believe, is it that makes the virtues grow the more, and also to draw nearer to essential virtue, God himself, from whom all virtue proceeds.

"Let us now speak of the third water wherewith this garden is watered—water running from a river or from a brook, whereby the garden is watered with very much less trouble, although there is some in directing the water. The powers of the soul are not wholly lost, nor yet do they understand how they work. The pleasure, sweetness and delight are incomparably greater than in the former state of prayer. The faculties are almost all completely in union, yet not so absorbed that they do not act. They now retain only the power of occupying themselves wholly with God. Many words are then uttered in praise of God; the soul longs to send forth these words of praise, but it has no control over itself—it is in a state of sweet restlessness.

"God is he who now takes upon himself the gardener's work and who wills the soul take its ease. In one of these visits, how brief soever it may be, the Gardener, being who he is—in a word, the Creator of the water—pours the water without stint. This state of prayer seems to me to be a most distinct union of the whole soul with God, but for this, that His Majesty appears to give the faculties leave to be intent upon, and have the fruition of, the great work he is doing there.

"In all these states of prayer, proceeding from the third water, which is water from the mainspring, so great is the bliss and repose of the soul, that even the body most distinctly shares in its joy and delight—and this is most plain; and the virtues continue to grow, as I said before.

"Let us speak now of the fourth water, which cometh down from heaven to fill and saturate in its abundance the whole of this garden with water. This water from heaven comes down very often when the gardener least expects it. The soul is conscious, with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance. All bodily strength vanishes, and that of the soul increases, to enable it the better to have the fruition of its joy. The outward effects are so plain as to leave no doubt possible that there must have been some great cause, seeing that it thus robs us of our bodily powers with so much joy, in order to leave them greater.

"This state of complete absorption, together with the utter rest of the imagination, lasts only for a short time. Let us now come to what the soul feels interiorly. Let him describe it who knows it; for as it is impossible to understand it, much more is it to describe it. But it is to be observed and understood that this water from heaven—this greatest grace of our Lord—always leaves in the soul the greatest fruits. The soul remains possessed of so much courage, that if it were now hewn in pieces for God, it would be a great consolation to it. This is the time of resolutions, of heroic determinations, of the living energy of good desires, of the beginning of hatred of the world, of the most clear perception of its vanity.

"The soul makes greater and higher progress than it ever made before in the previous states of prayer, and grows in humility more and more, because it sees clearly that neither for obtaining nor for retaining the grace, great beyond all measure, has it ever done, or ever been able to do, anything of itself. Its past life stands before it then, together with the great mercy of God, in great distinctness.

"Now that it clearly apprehends that the fruit is not its own, the soul can begin to share it with others, and that without any loss to itself. It begins to show signs of its

being a soul that is guarding the treasures of heaven, and to be desirous of communicating them to others, and to pray to God that itself may not be the only soul that is rich in them. It begins to benefit its neighbours, as it were, without being aware of it, or doing anything consciously: its neighbours understand the matter, because the odour of the flowers has grown so strong as to make them eager to approach them. They understand that this soul is full of virtue: they see the fruit, how delicious it is, and they wish to help that soul to eat it." (*Life written by herself,* ch. xi, xiv, xvi, xvii, xix.)

SECOND MEDITATION

MENTAL PRAYER

PRELUDE.—Let us speak of those who begin to be the servants of love; that seems to me to be nothing else but to resolve to follow him in the way of prayer, who has loved us so much.[1] It is a dignity so great, that I have a strange joy in thinking of it, for servile fear vanishes at once, if we are as we ought to be in the first degree.

FIRST POINT

As to him who has not begun to pray, I implore him by the love of our Lord not to deprive himself of so great a good.[2] Herein there is nothing to be afraid of; but everything to hope for. Granting that such a one does not advance, nor make an effort to become perfect, so as to merit the joys and consolations which the perfect receive from God, yet he will by little and little attain to a knowledge of the road which leads to heaven. And if he perseveres, I hope in the mercy of God for him, seeing that no one ever took him for his friend who was not amply rewarded; for mental prayer is nothing else, in my opinion, but being on terms of friendship with God, frequently conversing in secret with him who we know loves us.

Some I have met with think that, as regards perfect prayer,[3] the whole matter lies in thinking, and so, if they can think long about God, though by doing great violence to themselves, they believe forthwith that they are spiritual people; and if, unable to hold out longer, they turn to other occupations, however good, they fall immediately into great discomfort, and look upon themselves as last. Learned men do not labour under ignorance like this, yet I have found some who did so; but for us women it is well we should be warned to beware of all ignorance in these matters. I am

[1] *Life*, ch. xi. [2] Ch. viii. [3] *Foundations*, ch. v.

not saying that it is not a grace from our Lord that a person should be always able to persevere in meditation on his works, and it is right to make an effort to do so; but it must be understood that not every imagination is by nature able to do it, but every soul is able to love him. The good of the soul does not consist in thinking much, but in loving much.

The soul may place itself in the presence of Christ,[1] and accustom itself to many acts of love directed to his sacred Humanity, and remain in his presence continually, and speak to him, pray to him in its necessities, and complain to him of its troubles; be merry with him in its joys, and not forget him because of its joys. All this it may do without set prayers, but rather with words befitting its desires and its needs. This is an excellent way whereby to advance, and that very quickly. He that will strive to have this precious companionship, and will make much of it, and will sincerely love our Lord, to whom we owe so much, is one, in my opinion, who has made some progress.

Second Point

As to those who, like myself,[2] cannot make use of their understanding, I have no advice to give, except that they are to have patience, until our Lord shall send them both matter and light; for they can do so little of themselves, that their understanding is a hindrance to them rather than a help. Though they may attain more quickly to the state of contemplation if they persevere, by this way of inability to exert the intellect, yet is the process more laborious and painful; and if love have no present object to rest on, the soul is without support and without employment—its isolation and dryness occasion great pain, and the thoughts assail it most grievously. Persons in this condition must have greater purity of conscience than those who can make use of their understanding; for he who can use his intellect in the way of meditation on what the world is, on what he

[1] *Life*, ch. xii. [2] Ch. xiii. [3] Ch. iv.

owes to God, on the great sufferings of God for him, his own scanty service in return, and on the reward God reserves for those who love him, learns how to defend himself against his own thoughts, and against the occasions and perils of sin. On the other hand, he who has not that power is in greater danger, and ought to occupy himself much in reading, seeing that he is not in the slightest degree able to help himself.

This way of proceeding is so exceedingly painful, that, if the master who teaches it insists on cutting off the succours which reading gives, and requires the spending of much time in prayer, then, I say, it will be impossible to persevere long in it; and if he persists in his plan, health will be ruined, because it is a most painful process. Reading is of great service towards procuring recollection in anyone who proceeds in this way; and it is even necessary for him, however little it may be that he reads, if only as a substitute for the mental prayer which is beyond his reach.

To those who can make use of their understanding,[1] I say that they are not to spend the whole time in that way; for though it be most meritorious, yet they must not, when prayer is sweet, suppose that there never will be a Sunday or a time when no work ought to be done. They think it lost time to do otherwise; but I think that loss their greatest gain. Let them rather, as I have said, place themselves in the presence of Christ, and, without, fatiguing the understanding, converse with him, and in him rejoice, without wearying themselves in searching out reasons; but let them rather lay their necessities before him, and the just reasons there are why he should not suffer us in his presence—at one time this, at another time that, lest the soul should be wearied by always eating of the same food. These meats are most savoury and wholesome if the palate be accustomed to them; they will furnish a great support for the life of the soul, and they have many other advantages also.

Third Point

We should not be distressed by reason of our thoughts, nor allow ourselves to be worried by them; if they come from

[1] Ch. xiii.

the devil, he will let us alone if we take no notice of them; and if they are, as often happens, one of the many frailties entailed by Adam's sin, let us be patient and suffer them for the love of God.[1]

Do thou, O Lord, take into account all that we suffer in this way through our ignorance. We err in thinking that we need only know that we must keep our thoughts fixed on thee. We do not understand that we should consult those better instructed than ourselves, nor are we aware that there is anything for us to learn. We pass through terrible trials, on account of not understanding our own nature, and take what is not merely harmless, but good, for a grave fault.[2] This has been often the case with me, but I think that my scanty bodily health was now and then enough to bring it about. I dwell much on the harm which original sin has done us; that is, I believe, what has rendered us incapable of the fruition of so great a good.

I am very sorry when I see my soul in such bad company; I long to see it delivered therefrom, and so I say to our Lord: "When, O my God, shall I see my whole soul praising thee, that it may have the fruition of thee in all its faculties? Let me be no longer, O Lord, thus torn to pieces, and every one of them, as it were, running in a different direction!"

These troubles annoy us more or less according to the state of our health or in different circumstances.[3] The poor soul suffers; although not now to blame, it has sinned at other times, and must be patient. What you have read and been told, Christian souls, does not suffice to teach us to disregard wandering thoughts; therefore, in my opinion, I am not wasting time in instructing and consoling you about these trials. However, this will help you but little until God chooses to enlighten you, and additional measures are needed. His Majesty wishes us to learn by ordinary means to understand ourselves and to recognize the share taken in these troubles by our wandering imagination, our nature, and the devil's temptations, instead of laying all the blame on our souls.

[1] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. i.

[2] *Life*, ch. xxx.

[3] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. i.

Colloquy

I cannot understand, O my Creator, why the whole world does not labour to draw near to thee in this particular friendship of mental prayer![1] The wicked ought to do so in order that thou mayest make them good, and for that purpose should permit thee to remain with them, even though they may not remain with thee but as I used to do, with a thousand distractions, and with worldly thoughts. In return for this violence which they offer to themselves for the purpose of remaining in a company so good as thine—for at first they can do no more, and even afterwards at times—thou, O Lord, defendest them against the assaults of evil spirits, whose power thou restrainest, and even lessenest daily, giving to them the victory over these their enemies.

O infinite goodness of my God! I seem to see thee and myself in this relation to one another. O joy of the angels! When I consider it, I wish I could wholly die of love. How true it is that thou endurest those who will not endure thee! Oh, how good a friend art thou, O my Lord! How thou comfortest and endurest, and also waitest for them to make themselves like unto thee, and yet, in the meanwhile, art thyself so patient of the state they are in! Thou takest into account the occasions during which they seek thee, and for a moment of penitence forgettest their offences against thyself.

Resolution

Be most careful to keep your morning meditation before your mind throughout the day, for it is most helpful.[2]

READING

Blooming of the Spiritual Garden

"A beginner," St Teresa says, "must look upon himself as making a garden, wherein our Lord may take his delight, but in a soil unfruitful and abounding in weeds. His

[1] *Life*, ch. viii. [2] *Maxims*.

Majesty roots up the weeds and has to plant good herbs. Let us, then, take for granted that this is already done when a soul is determined to give itself to prayer and has begun the practice of it. We have then as good gardeners, by the help of God, to see that the plants grow, to water them carefully, that they may not die, but produce blossoms, which shall send forth much fragrance, refreshing to our Lord, so that he may come often for his pleasure into this garden, and delight himself in the midst of these virtues.

"Let us now return to our orchard, or flower garden, and behold now how the trees begin to fill with sap for the bringing forth of the blossoms, and then of the fruit—the flowers and the plants, also, their fragrance. This illustration pleases me; for very often when I was beginning—and our Lord grant that I have really begun to serve His Majesty; I mean, begun in relation to what I have to say of my life—it was to me a great joy to consider my soul as a garden, and our Lord as walking in it. I used to beseech him to increase the fragrance of the little flowers of virtues—which were beginning as it seemed to bud—and preserve them, that they might be to his glory; for I desired nothing for myself. I prayed him to cut those he liked, because I already knew that they would grow the better.

"I say 'cut'; for there are times in which the soul has no recollection of this garden—everything seems parched, and there is no water to be had for preserving it—and in which it seems as if the soul had never possessed any virtue at all. This is the season of heavy trials; for our Lord will have the poor gardener suppose all the trouble he took in maintaining and watering the garden to have been taken to no purpose. Then is the time really for weeding and rooting out every plant, however small it may be, that is worthless, in the knowledge that no efforts of ours are sufficient, if God withholds from us the waters of his grace; and in despising ourselves as being nothing, and even less than nothing. In this way we gain great humility—the flowers grow afresh." (*Life by herself*, ch. xi and xiv.)

THIRD MEDITATION

ARIDITY IN PRAYER

PRELUDE.—Our Lord said to me once, consoling me, that I was not to distress myself—this he said most lovingly—because in this life we could not continue in the same state.[1] At one time I should be fervent, at another not; now disquieted, and again at peace, and tempted; but I must hope in him, and fear not.

FIRST POINT

The want of detachment very frequently produces the great dryness we feel in prayer, though sometimes it proceeds from other causes as well.[2] I am not speaking of certain interior sufferings which give intolerable pain to many devout souls through no fault of their own; from these trials, however, our Lord always delivers them with much profit to themselves. I also except people who suffer from melancholy and other infirmities. But in these cases, as in all others, we must leave aside the judgements of God.

I hold that these effects usually result from the first cause I mentioned; such souls know that nothing would induce them to commit a sin (many of them would not even commit a venial sin advertently) and that they employ their life and riches well. They cannot, therefore, patiently endure to be excluded from the presence of our King, whose vassals they consider themselves, as indeed they are. An earthly king may have many subjects, yet all do not enter his court. Enter, then, enter, my daughters, into your interior; pass beyond the thought of your own petty works, which are no more, not even as much, as Christians are bound to perform: let it suffice that you are God's servants; do not pursue so much as to catch nothing. Think of the Saints, who have entered the divine Presence, and you will see the difference between them and ourselves.

[1] *Life*, ch. xl. [2] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. i.

Do not ask for what you do not deserve, nor should we ever think, however much we may have done for God, that we merit the reward of the Saints, for we have offended him. Oh, humility, humility! I know not why, but I am always tempted to think that persons who complain so much of aridities must be a little wanting in this virtue. However, I am not speaking of severe interior sufferings, which are far worse than a want of devotion.

Let us try ourselves, Christians, or let our Lord try us; he knows well how to do so, although we often pretend to misunderstand him.

Second Point

Let us consider what they do for God, and we shall see at once what litttle right we have to murmur against His Majesty. If we turn our backs on him and go away sorrowfully like the young youth in the Gospel when he tells us what to do to be perfect, what can God do? For he must proportion the reward to our love for him. This love, my daughters, must not be the fabric of our imagination; we must prove it by our works. Yet do not suppose that our Lord has need of any works of ours; he only expects us to manifest our goodwill.

It seems to us we have done everything, by taking the religious habit of our own will, and renouncing worldly things and all our possessions for God. Although they may have been but the nets of St Peter, yet they seemed much to us, for they were our all. This is an excellent disposition: if we continue in it and do not return, even in desire, to the company of the reptiles of the first rooms, doubtless by persevering in this poverty and detachment of soul we shall obtain all for which we strive. But mark this—it must be on one condition—that we hold ourselves for unprofitable servants, as we are told either by St Paul or by Christ, and that we do not consider that our Lord is bound to grant us any favours, but that, as we have received more from Him, we are the deeper in his debt.

How little is all we can do for so generous a God, who died for us, who created us, who gives us being, that we think

ourselves happy to be able to acquit ourselves of part of the debt we owe him for having served us, without asking him for fresh mercies and favours!

Third Point

You must reap humility from your dryness, instead of the disquietude the devil strives to cause by it.[1] I believe that where true humility exists, although God should never bestow consolations, yet he gives a peace and resignation which make the soul happier than are others with sensible devotion. These consolations, as you have read, are often given by the divine Majesty to the weakest souls who, I suppose, would not exchange them for the fortitude of Christians serving God in aridities: we love consolations better than the cross! Do thou, O Lord, who knowest all truth, so prove us that we may know ourselves.

To conclude, we must walk in liberty on this road, committing ourselves into the hands of God.[2] If it be His Majesty's good pleasure to raise us and place us among his chamberlains and secret councillors, we must go willingly; if not, we must serve him in the lower offices of his house, and not sit down on the upper seats. As I have sometimes said, God is more careful of us than we are ourselves, and knows what each one of us is fit for.

What use is there in governing oneself by oneself, when the whole will has been given up to God? As we do not understand our own needs nor what to ask for, let us leave all to our Lord, who knows us better than we know ourselves.[3] A lowly heart is content with what is given it, yet there are people who ask for favours from God as a matter of simple justice. What humility! Therefore he who knows all things rightly abstains from granting these gifts to such persons, seeing they are unfit to drink of his chalice.

[1] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. i.
[2] *Life*, ch. xxii.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xviii.

Colloquy

What shall I do, O Lord, if for a long time I am conscious[1] only of aridity, disgust, dislike, and so great an unwillingness to go to the spiritual well for water, that I would give it up altogether, if I did not remember that I have to please and serve thee? Well, I will rejoice and take comfort, and consider it as the greatest favour to labour in the garden of so great an Emperor. I will help thee to carry the Cross and think how thou hast carried it thy life long; I will not seek my kingdom here, nor ever intermit my prayer; I will resolve, if this aridity should last even my whole life long, never to let thee, O Christ, fall down beneath the Cross.

Resolution

Let us praise His Majesty and trust in his goodness who has never failed those who love him.

READING

St Teresa's Sufferings from Aridity in Prayer

She writes: "I do not understand what there can be to make them afraid, who are never to begin mental prayer, nor do I know what it is they dread. The devil does well to bring this fear upon us, that he may really hurt us; if, by putting me in fear, he can make me cease from thinking of my offences against God, of the great debt I owe him, of the existence of heaven and hell, and of the great sorrow and trials he underwent for me. That was all my prayer, and had been, when I was in this dangerous state, and it was on those subjects I dwelt whenever I could; and very often, for some years, I was more occupied with the wish to see the end of the time I had appointed for myself to spend in prayer, and in watching the hour-glass, than in other thoughts

[1] *Life*, ch. xi.

that were good. If a sharp penance had been laid upon me. I know of none that I would not very often have willingly undertaken, rather than prepare myself for prayer by self-recollection. And this was so irresistible, or my evil habits were so strong, that I did not betake myself to prayer; and the sadness I felt in entering the oratory was so great, that it required all the courage I had to force myself in. They say of me that my courage is not slight, and it is known that God has given me a courage beyond that of a woman; but I have made a bad use of it. In the end, our Lord came to my help; and then when I had done this violence to myself, I found greater peace and joy than I sometimes had when I had a desire to pray.

"If, then, our Lord bore so long with me, who was so wicked—and it is plain that it was by prayer all my evil was corrected – why should anyone, how wicked he may be, have any fear? Let him be ever so wicked, he will not remain in his wickedness so many years as I did, after receiving so many graces from our Lord. Is there anyone who can despair, when he bore so long with me, only because I desired and contrived to find some place and some opportunities for him to be alone with me—and that very often against my will? For I did violence to myself, or rather our Lord himself did violence to me." (*Life written by herself*, ch. viii.)

St Teresa is here speaking of the early part of her life of perfection. Even after divine favours had been fully lavished upon her, she experienced at intervals the subtraction of all sensible grace.

"It is only just now it happened to me to be for eight days in a state wherein it seemed that I did not, and could not, confess my obligations to God, or remember his mercies; my soul was so stupefied and occupied with I know not what nor how: not that I had any bad thoughts, only I was so incapable of good thoughts, I was laughing at myself, and even rejoicing to see how mean a soul can be if God is not always working in it. The soul sees clearly that God is not away from it in this state, and that it is not in those great tribulations which I have spoken of as being occasionally mine. Though it heaps up fuel, and does the little it

can do of itself, it cannot make the fire of the love of God burn; it is a great mercy that even the smoke is visible, showing that it is not altogether quenched. Our Lord will return and kindle it; and until then the soul—though it may lose its breath in blowing and arranging the fuel—seems to be doing nothing but putting it out more and more.

"I believe that now the best course is to be absolutely resigned, confessing that we can do nothing, and to apply ourselves—as I said before—to something else which is meritorious. Our Lord, it may be, takes away from the soul the power of praying, that it may betake itself to something else, and learn by experience how little it can do in its own strength.

"It is true I have this day been rejoicing in our Lord, and have dared to complain to His Majesty. I said unto him: 'How is it, O my God, that it is not enough for thee to detain me in this wretched life, and that I should have to bear with it for the love of thee, and be willing to live where everything hinders the fruition of thee; where, besides, I must eat and sleep, transact business, and converse with everyone, and all for thy love? How is it, then—for thou well knowest, O my Lord, all this to be the greatest torment unto me—that, in the rare moments when I am with thee, thou hidest thyself from me? How is this consistent with thy compassion? How can that love thou hast for me endure this? I believe, O Lord, if it were possible for me to hide myself from thee, as thou hidest thyself from me—I think and believe so—such is thy love, that thou wouldst not endure it at my hands. But thou art with me, and seest me always. O my God, I beseech thee look to this; it must not be; a wrong is done to one who loves thee so much.'

"I uttered these words, and others of the same kind, when I should have been thinking rather how my place in hell was pleasant in comparison with the place I deserved. But now and then my love makes me foolish, so that I lose my senses; only it is with all the sense I have that I make these complaints, and our Lord bears it all. Blessed be so good a King." (*Ibid.*, ch. xxxvii.)

FOURTH MEDITATION

MENTAL PRAYER THE MAINSPRING OF ALL SPIRITUAL GOOD

PRELUDE.—How great is the good which God works in a soul when he gives it a disposition to pray in earnest, though it may not be so well prepared as it ought to be.[1] If that soul perseveres in spite of sins, temptations and relapses brought about in a thousand ways by Satan, our Lord will bring it at last—I am certain of it—to the harbour of salvation, as he has brought me myself.[2] Besides, he does not wait until the next life to reward our love for him, but begins to pay us even here.

FIRST POINT

Prayer is the door to the great graces.[3] If this door be shut, I do not see how God can bestow them; for even if he wished to enter into a soul to take his delight therein, and to make that soul also delight in him, there is no way by which he can do so; for his will is that such a soul should be lonely and pure, with a great desire to receive his graces. If we put many hindrances in the way and take no pains whatever to remove them, how can he come to us? I ask, Why should they abstain from prayer who serve and desire to serve him? Certainly I cannot comprehend it, unless it be that they have a mind to go through the troubles of this life in greater misery, and to shut the door in the face of God, so that he shall give them no comfort in it. I am most truly sorry for them, because they serve God at their own cost; for of those who pray, God himself defrays the charges, seeing that for a little trouble he gives sweetness, in order that, by the help it supplies, they may bear their trials.

Our Lord always furnishes an opportunity for prayer,

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii. [2] *Concept.*, ch. iv [3] *Life*, ch. viii

if we but seek it.[1] I say "always"; for though there may be times, as in illness, and from other causes, when we cannot be much alone, yet it never can be but there must be opportunities when our strength is sufficient for the purpose; and in sickness itself, and amidst other hindrances, true prayer consists, when the soul loves, in offering up its burden, and in thinking of him for whom it suffers, and in the resignation of the will, and in a thousand ways which then present themselves. It is under these circumstances that love exerts itself; for it is not necessarily prayer when we are alone; and neither is it not prayer when we are not. With a little care, we may find great blessings on those occasions when our Lord, by means of afflictions, deprives us of time for prayer.

Second Point

God showeth great mercy unto him to whom he gives the grace and resolution to strive for this blessing with all his might, for he withholds himself from no one who perseveres.[2] He will, by little and little, strengthen that soul, so that it may come forth victorious. I say "resolution," because of the multitude of those things which Satan puts before it at first, to keep it back from beginning to travel on this road; for he knoweth what harm will befall him thereby—he will lose not only that soul, but many others also. If he who enters on this road does violence to himself, with the help of God, so as to reach the summit of perfection, such a one, I believe, will never go alone to heaven; he will always take many with him: God gives to him, as to a good captain, those who shall be of his company. But the dangers and difficulties which Satan puts before them are so many, that they have need, not of a little, but of a very great resolution, and great grace from God, to save them from falling away.

What I have to say is that the labour is greater at first; for it is they who toil, our Lord indeed giving them strength. In the other degrees of prayer there is more fruition, although

[1] Ch. viii. [2] Ch. xi.

they who are in the beginning, in the middle, and the end, have their crosses to carry ; the crosses, however, are different. They who would follow Christ, if they do not wish to be lost, must walk in the way he walked himself. Blessed labours ! even here, in this life, so superabundantly rewarded !

Oh, what nothingness is all we do, or ever could do, for a God who thus wills to communicate himself to a worm ![1] If we hope to enjoy this favour even during our mortal life, what are we doing? Why do we delay? . . . Our gaze fixed on the great reward to come and on his infinite mercy in seeking to give and to manifest himself to such worms as we are,[2] let us forget our wretched, petty, earthly pleasures, and run on our way with eyes fixed on his grandeur, inflamed with love for him.

Third Point

In order to disturb the soul and to prevent it from enjoying these great graces which come by the way of mental prayer,[3] the evil one will himself suggest, and will make other people arouse in you a thousand false fears, for if he cannot win you for himself, at least he will try to snatch something from you and to cause some loss to souls who might have benefited greatly by believing that the favours shown to a miserable wretch came from God ; he will also suggest that it is impossible for such things to be, for nowadays we sometimes seem to forget his mercies in the past.

Do you fancy that the devil wins but little through these fears ? No, indeed, he gains immensely. He thus harms us in two well-known manners, as well as in many others. First, he frightens those who listen to him from practising prayer, by making them dread deception ; secondly, he deters many others from devoting themselves to God as they were inclined to do when witnessing the immense goodness which leads him to communicate himself so fully to sinners. Such souls think he would console them in the same way, and long

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. iv.
[2] Vth Mansion, ch. iv.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xl.

that he should. They are right in this. I know certain persons who, thus encouraged, have given themselves to prayer and, in a short time, have become thorough contemplatives, receiving great graces from God.

Take my advice, Christian souls, and let no one mislead you by pointing out any other way to union with God than prayer.[1] If anyone tells you it is dangerous, look upon *him* as your greatest danger and shun his company. Keep my words in mind, for you may need them. A want of humility, of the virtues, may endanger you, but prayer—*prayer!* Never would God permit this!

Colloquy

When I consider,[2] O my God and my Lord! the dignity of thy divine Majesty and the greatness of thy sovereign bounty, which lead thee to communicate so intimately with base creatures, I ask myself how it is that they are not beside themselves with wonder, and do not seek thy grace and friendship with all their heart. O my Lord, how good thou art![3] Blessed be thou for ever, O my God! Let all creatures praise thee, who hast so loved us that we can truly speak of this communication which thou hast with souls in this our exile! Yea, even if they be good souls, it is on thy part great munificence and magnanimity—in a word, it is thy munificence, O my Lord, seeing that thou givest like thyself. O infinite munificence! how magnificent are thy works! Even he whose understanding is not occupied with the things of earth is amazed that he is unable to understand these truths. Why, then, give graces so high to souls who have been such great sinners? Truly, this passeth my understanding.

O Lord! thou art never weary of giving nor can thy compassion be exhausted.[4] O Christians, let us not grow weary ourselves of receiving! May he be blessed for ever, amen; and may all created things praise him!

[1] Ch. xxi.
[2] *Concept.*, ch. i
[3] *Life*, ch. xviii.
[4] *Life*, ch. xix.

Resolution

Let us beseech God to give us grace and resolution to strive for this blessing with all our might.[1]

READING

How much St Teresa esteemed Mental Prayer and helped Others to progress in the same

"Loving my father so much," she says, "I longed to see him in the possession of that good which I seemed to derive myself from prayer. I thought that in this life there could not be a greater good than prayer; and so, by roundabout ways, as well as I could, I contrived to make him enter upon it; I gave him books for that end. As he was so good—I said so before—this exercise took such a hold upon him, that in five or six years, I think it was, he made so great a progress that I used to praise our Lord for it. It was a very great consolation to me. He had most grievous trials of diverse kinds; and he bore them all with the greatest resignation. He came often to see me; for it was a comfort to him to speak of the things of God.

"My father was not the only person whom I prevailed upon to practise prayer, though I was walking in vanity myself. When I saw persons fond of reciting their prayers, I showed them how to make a meditation, and helped them and gave them books; for from the time I began myself to pray, as I said before, I always had a desire that others should serve God. I thought, now that I did not myself serve our Lord according to the light I had, that the knowledge His Majesty had given me ought not to be lost, and that others should serve him for me. I say this in order to explain the great blindness I was in: going to ruin myself, and labouring to save others." (*Life written by herself*, ch. vii.)

When St Teresa had begun a perfect life, her longing for seeing others enriched with the treasures which are the fruit

[1] *Life*, ch. xi.

of mental prayer increased exceedingly. The following is an example of this, amongst many others:

"It was our Lord's pleasure that the household of that lady[1] improved in the service of His Majesty during my stay there, though I was not exempted from some trials and some jealousies on the part of some of its members, because of the great affection their mistress had for me.

"When I was there, a religious person of great consideration,[2] and with whom I had conversed occasionally some years ago, happened to arrive. When I was at Mass, in a monastery of his Order, near the house in which I was staying, I felt a longing to know the state of his soul—for I wished him to be a great servant of God—and I rose up in order to go and speak to him. But as I was then recollected in prayer, it seemed to me a waste of time—for what had I to do in that matter?—and so I returned to my place. Three times I think I did this, and at last my good angel prevailed over the evil one, and I went and asked for him; and he came to speak to me in one of the confessionals.

"We began by asking one another about our past lives, for we had not seen each other for many years. I told him that my life had been one in which my soul had had many trials. He insisted much on my telling him what those trials were. I said that they were not to be told, and that I was not to tell them. He replied that the Dominican father, of whom I have spoken, knew them, and that, as they were great friends, he could learn them from him, and so I had better tell them without hesitation.

"The fact is, that it was not in his power not to insist, nor in mine, I believe, to refuse to speak; for notwithstanding all the troubles and shame I used to feel formerly, I spoke of my state to him, and to the rector whom I have referred to before, without any difficulty whatever; on the contrary, it was a great consolation to me; so I told him all in confession. He seemed to me then more prudent than ever; though I had always looked upon him as a man of great

[1] Dona Luisa de la Cerda.
[2] Fr. Gaspard de Toledo, Dominican.

understanding. I considered what high gifts and endowments for great services he had, if he gave himself wholly unto God. I had had this feeling now for many years, so that I never saw anyone who pleased me much without wishing at once he were given wholly unto God; and sometimes I feel this so keenly, that I can hardly contain myself. Though I long to see everybody serve God, yet my desire about those who please me is very vehement, and so I importune our Lord on their behalf. So it happened with respect to this religious. He asked me to pray much for him to God. There was no necessity for his doing so, because I could not do anything else.

"So I went to the place where I was in the habit of praying alone, and began to pray to our Lord, being extremely recollected, in that my simple, silly way, when I speak without knowing very often what I am saying. It is love that speaks, and my soul is so beside itself that I do not regard the distance between it and God. That love which I know His Majesty has for it makes it forget itself, and think itself to be one with him; and so, as being one with him, and not divided from him, the soul speaks foolishly. When I had prayed with many tears that the soul of this religious might serve him truly—for, though I considered it good, it was not enough for me; I would have it much better—I remember I said: 'O Lord, thou must not refuse me this grace; behold him—he is a fit person to be our friend.'

"Oh the great goodness and compassion of God! How he regards not the words, but the desire and the will with which they are spoken! How he suffered such a one as I am to speak so boldly before His Majesty! May he be blessed for evermore!" (*Life written by herself,* ch. xxxiv.)

SIXTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

HUMILITY

PRELUDE.—What I have understood of the matter is this :[1] that the whole foundation of prayer must be laid in humility, and that the more the soul humbles itself in prayer, the more God lifts it up. Once, while I was wondering why our Lord so dearly loves the virtue of humility, the thought suddenly struck me, without previous reflection, that it is because God is the supreme Truth, and humility[2] is the *truth*, for it is most true that we have nothing good of ourselves, but only misery and nothingness: whoever ignores this, lives a life of falsehood. They that realize this fact most deeply are the most pleasing to God, the supreme Truth, for they walk in the truth.

FIRST POINT

Humility! humility, Christian souls! for God lets himself be vanquished by this and grants us all we ask.[3] If we practised humility, how quickly we should checkmate the divine King, so that he neither could, nor would, move out of our check.[4] The queen is his strongest opponent in the game, and all the other pieces help her. No queen can defeat him so soon as can humility.

There is a humility won by means of our intellect,[5] and one gained by a pure intuition of the truth, by which we perceive, in an instant, our own nothingness and the greatness of God with greater clearness than we could have learnt it in many years by the use of our reason.[6] When it is the work of the Spirit of God, there is no necessity for

[1] *Life*, ch. xxii. [2] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. x.
[3] IVth Mansion, ch. ii.
[4] The comparison is taken from the game of chess.
[5] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxii. [6] *Life*, ch. xv.

going about searching for reasons on the strength of which we may elicit acts of humility and of shame, because our Lord himself supplies them in a way very different from that by which we could acquire them by our own poor reflections, which are as nothing in comparison with that real humility arising out of the light which our Lord here gives us, and which begets a confusion of face that undoes us. The knowledge with which God supplies us, in order that we may know that of ourselves we have no good in us, is perfectly apprehended—and the more perfectly, the greater the graces.

I knew a person[1] to whom our Lord revealed the results of a mortal sin.[2] She said that the vision was a mirror to teach her humility, for she saw that nothing good in us springs from ourselves, but comes from the waters of grace, near which the soul remains like a tree planted beside a river, and from that Sun which gives life to our works. She realized this so vividly that on seeing any good deed performed by herself or by other people, she at once turned to God as to its fountain-head—without whose help she well knew we can do nothing—and broke out into songs of praise to him. Generally she forgot all about herself and only thought of God when she did any meritorious action.

Second Point

The best sign that any of you have made progress, Christian souls, is that you think yourself the last of all and prove it by your behaviour, for the well-being and good of others.[3] This is the true test—not sweetness in prayer, ecstasies, visions, and other divine favours of the same kind. The value of these latter we cannot estimate rightly until the next life, but the former is current coin, a constant revenue and a perpetual inheritance, not mere part-payments which, when acquitted, cease. I speak of great humility and other virtues. If you do not experience these other

[1] The Saint herself. [2] *Interior Castle*, 1st Mansion, ch. ii.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xviii.

devotional feelings, which are unreliable, do not be distressed. Although, in other people's case it may come from God, yet in yours he might permit it to be an illusion of the devil, who would misled you as he has misled many others.

Let each one examine whether he is truly humble and he will learn what progress he has made.[1]

Extreme humility is the principal point. It is the want of this, I believe, that stops people's progress. Let us always think that we have made but little way and that others are advancing much more rapidly than we are. Not only should we wish others to consider us the worst of all; we should endeavour to make them think so. If we act in this manner, our soul will do well; otherwise we shall make no progress and shall always remain the prey to a thousand troubles and miseries. The way will be difficult and wearisome without self-renunciation, weighed down as we are by the burden and frailties of human nature, while others are ascending freely to God.

O Christians! what wonders shall we see, if we keep ever before our eyes our own baseness and frailty, and recognize how unworthy we are to be the servants of so great a Lord, whose marvels are beyond our comprehension![2]

Third Point

Pay great attention, now, to what I am about to say.[3] At one time it may be humility and a virtue to think we are sinful, and at another time it is a most dangerous temptation. I know this, for I have passed through this state myself. There is, in fact, a false humility, and Satan invented it for the purpose of disquieting me, and trying whether he could thereby drive my soul to despair. That it is his work is clear from the restlessness and discomfort with which it begins, and the trouble it causes in the soul while it lasts; from the obscurity and distress, the aridity and indisposition for prayer and for every good work, which he produces.

[1] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. ii.
[2] *Life*, ch. xxiii.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxix.

It seems to stifle the soul and trammel the body, so as to make them good for nothing.

That humility,[1] which is the work of Satan, furnishes no light for any good work; it pictures God as bringing upon everything fire and sword; it dwells upon his justice; and the soul's faith in the mercy of God—for the power of the devil does not reach so far as to destroy faith—is of such a nature as to give no consolation: on the contrary, the consideration of mercies so great helps to increase the pain, because I look upon myself as bound to render greater service.

I believe that this is a plot of the devil to make us think we are humble, and at the same time to lead us to distrust God.[2] If you are ever in this state, turn your thoughts, as far as possible, from your own misery and meditate on the mercy of God, his love for us, and all that he suffered for our sakes. To tell the truth, if this depression is a temptation, you will be unable to do even this, or to calm your mind and fix it on any other subject except that which wearies you still more; it will be much if you even recognize that it is a temptation.

True humility is not attended with trouble; it does not disturb the soul; it causes neither obscurity nor aridity; on the contrary, it consoles.[3] It is altogether different, bringing with it calm, sweetness and light. It is no doubt painful; but, on the other hand, it is consoling, because we see how great is the mercy of our Lord in allowing the soul to have that pain, and how well the soul is occupied. On the one hand, the soul grieves over its offences against God; on the other, his compassion makes it glad. It has light, which makes it ashamed of itself, and it gives thanks to His Majesty, who has borne with it so long. In a word, true humility is peaceful, sweet, serene.

Colloquy

What is he worth, O my Lord, who does not utterly abase himself to nothing for thee?[4] How much, how much,

[1] *Life*, ch. xxx.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxix.
[3] *Life*, xxx.
[4] *Life*, *ch.* xxxix.

how much—I might say so a thousand times—I fall short of this! It is on this account that I do not wish to live—though there be other reasons also—because I do not live according to the obligations which bind me to thee. What imperfections I trace in myself! what remissness in thy service! Certainly I could wish occasionally I had no sense, that I might be unconscious of the great evil that is in me.

O my Lord! after having served thee so ill and known so little how to preserve past graces, how dare I ask for more?[1] How canst thou trust one who has so often proved a traitor? What then shall I do, Consoler of the disconsolate and Refuge of all those who come to thee for help? Is it better to say nothing of my wants in the hope of thy relieving them? Not so, for thou, my Lord and my joy, knowing how numerous would be our needs and what solace we should find in confiding them to thee, didst bid us pray to thee, for thou wouldst not fail to give.

Resolution

Let us fix our eyes on Christ, our only Good, and on his Saints; there we shall learn true humility.[2]

READING

St Teresa's Humility

A confessor of St Teresa gave the following account while the Saint was still living:

"Let us say something about the admirable humility and self-contempt of this servant of God. Everything she says or writes—in short, all that comes from her—is saturated with humility. She earnestly desires that all her faults, all the miseries of her past life may be known by everyone. She greatly grieves whenever people think her good. When first divine graces were bestowed on her, she left no stone

[1] *Exclamations*, v.
[2] *Interior Castle*, Ist Mansion, ch. *ii*.

unturned in order to conceal them, lest she should be esteemed for them. Although endowed with great talents, she never trusts to herself, but always contrives to act by the advice of others.

"Before her confessors were certain that it was God's Spirit that worked in her, they determined for certain good reasons to tell her that, having considered the subject, they were all of opinion that her experiences were mere illusions of Satan. Since it was beyond her power to resist them, she ought, whenever he who spoke to her presented himself, to make a gesture of contempt and the sign of the cross. Great as was the spiritual profit she had reaped from the locutions and visions granted to her, she resolved to obey, and though convinced that they were from God, she did not own opinion on herself. Yet it was grievous to her to be obliged to deal in such a way with her Lord and Spouse, and she wept bitterly.

"She used to entreat His Majesty not to suffer her to be deceived by the devil, recommending herself to SS Peter and Paul. She saw them often afterwards standing on her left: they assured her that she would not be deceived.

"Once I wrote telling her that she was to be visited by a lady of the highest rank, who was persuaded of the reality of the graces she received. This distressed her exceedingly, so great was her conviction of her own unworthiness and her reluctance at having any intercourse with the great ones of the world, especially those who she was aware considered she was good. But our Lord told her not to grieve, because it was beneficial that the graces he granted her should be made known; that she ought to speak plainly and freely to the great ones of the world; that they were in need of her, but she did not need them.

"I urged her for some time to ask our Lord if it would give him glory if I went to a certain place—there is no reason for me, when speaking of so holy a woman, to mention details of what concerns me—but she entreated me most earnestly not to speak of it any more. She added that did my request come from the knowledge I had of the graces bestowed upon her, she believed the earth would swallow her up and hell would be her sepulchre, to punish her for being so

bold as to do such a thing. In a word, her humility is incredible, as those who deal intimately with her can testify." (Relation of Fr. Peter Ibanez, of the Order of St Dominic.)

"Our holy Mother," declared Mother Isabel of St Dominic, "undertook the meanest employments in the convent, and performed them with great delight and wonderful charity, particularly while starting the foundation, when the sisters were very few. No lay-sisters having yet been received and the choir-nuns being under the obligation of attending the divine office, each undertook, during a week, to cook in the kitchen. The holy Mother filled the office for a week like the others. I helped her in this employment, and many a time I witnessed how our Lord rapt her in a high degree of prayer while she fulfilled it, so that I could not possibly take from her hands the saucepan she was holding over the fire, so tightly did she grasp it. Being afraid lest the oil might be spilled, for there was no other in the convent to dress the meal for the community, I remained close to her until she came out of her trance. I saw an angelical beauty in her face under such circumstances. She performed the meanest services for her sisters with great perfection, being anxious to relieve them from their labour, and took the utmost pains to cook their scanty meal well." (Process of Avila.)

"Sometimes she cast herself at the feet of her daughters and asked their pardon, if she thought she had grieved them by reprehending them. She used to beg them to pray for her, because she was a great sinner. She was often blamed by her superiors, and received the correction with profound humility, prostrating on the ground until told to rise, and keeping absolute silence unless commanded to give an account of her action. She would then do so briefly, with such sincerity, candour and clearness that the superior would feel not only satisfied but even confused." (See Ribera, part iv, ch. xvi.)

"A friar once warned her: 'Mother Teresa, beware of vainglory.' She replied with holy humility: 'Vainglory, father? and about what? I assure you that I do much in not falling into despair, being what I am.'" (Yepes, part iii, ch. vii.)

SECOND MEDITATION

THE AGONY OF OUR LORD

PRELUDE.—Our Lord showed himself to me almost always as he is after his resurrection ; at those times when I was in trouble, and when it was his will to strengthen me, he showed his wounds. Sometimes I saw him on the Cross in the Garden.[1]

FIRST POINT

You need not fear, faithful souls, that when you say to God,[2] "Thy will be done," he will give you riches, or pleasures, or great honours, or any earthly good—his love for you is not so lukewarm. He places a higher value on your gift and wishes to reward you generously, since he has given you his kingdom even in this life. Would you like to see how he treats those who make this petition without reserve? Ask his glorious Son, who in the Garden uttered it truthfully and resolutely. See whether the will of God was not accomplished in the trials, the sufferings, the insults and the persecution sent him, until at last his life was ended on the Cross. Thus you see, Christians, what God gave to him he loved best; this shows what his will means. These are his gifts in this world, and he grants them in proportion to his affection for us. To souls he cherishes most he gives more—and fewer to those less dear to him, according to their courage and the love he sees they bear him. For fervent love can suffer much for him, while tepidity will endure but little. For my part, I believe that our love is the measure of the cross we can bear.

SECOND POINT

At the beginning of my spitiitual life, I used to find myself the better for thinking of those mysteries of his life during which he was most lonely.[3] It seemed to me that the being

[1] *Life*, ch. xxix. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxii. [3] *Life*, ch. ix.

alone and afflicted, like a person in trouble, must needs permit me to come near unto him. I did many simple things of the kind. In particular I used to find myself most at home in the prayer in the Garden, whither I went in his company. I thought of the bloody sweat, and of the affliction he endured there; I wished, if it had been possible, to wipe away that painful sweat from his face, but I remember that I never dared to form such a resolution—my sins stood before me so grievously. I used to remain with him as long as my thoughts allowed me, and I had many thoughts to torment me.

The soul raised to the union with God comprehends this mystery,[1] which is brought before the mind and stamped in the memory, in a more perfect way than do other people, so that the mere sight of our Lord prostrate in the Garden, covered with his terrible sweat, suffices to engross the thoughts, not merely for an hour, but for several days. The soul looks with a simple gaze upon who he is, and how ungratefully we treat him in return for such terrible sufferings.

Third Point

Watch him, Christian souls, on his way to the Garden.[2] What grief must have arisen in his soul to cause him, who was patience itself, to manifest it and to complain of it! Listen to him as he says: "My soul is sorrowful unto death."[3] Remember also this word in the Garden:[4] "The flesh is weak,"[5] and think of his wonderful and grievous sweat. If, as His Majesty said, his divine and sinless flesh was weak, how can our flesh be so strong, while we live in this world, as not to dread the persecutions and trials that menace it? When they arrive, the flesh will become subject to the spirit; for after our will has become united to the will of God, it will lament no more.

Therefore let us not trouble about our fears nor lose

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. vii
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxv.
[3] *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem* (Matt. xxvi 38).
[4] *Concept.*, ch. iii. [5] *Caro autem infirma* (*ibid.*, 41).

heart at the sight of our frailty, but strive to fortify our humility and be clearly convinced of how little we can do for ourselves, for without the grace of God we are nothing. Let us confide in his mercy and distrust our own strength in every way, because reliance on this is the root of all our weakness.

It is not without strong reason that our Lord showed weakness, for it is plain that he who is power itself could never feel fear. He acted thus to comfort us, to show that good desires must be carried out in deeds, and to make us recognize that when the soul first begins mortifying itself, it finds everything painful. It is a pain to give up pleasures, torment to forgo honour; an intolerable trial to bear a hard word; in short, nothing but mortal sufferings. But when once determined to die to this world, it is freed from all these ills, and no trials can make it complain.

Colloquy

O Prince of all the earth! art thou reduced to such straits, my Lord, my only Good, that thou art willing to consort with such a wretch as myself?[1] Yet thy looks tell me that thou findest some comfort even in me. How can it be that thou art forsaken by the angels, and that thy Father consoles thee not? If it be thy will to suffer thus for me, what do I suffer for thee in return? Of what have I to complain? Shame at seeing thee in such a plight shall make me endure all the trials that may come to me: I will count them gain, that I may imitate thee in something.

Resolution

When sad or troubled, do not omit your accustomed prayers or penances, which the devil is then striving to make you leave off.[2] Pray and mortify yourself more than usual, and you will find that God will soon come to your aid.

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvi. [2] *Maxims*.

READING

HONOUR RENDERED BY ST TERESA TO OUR LORD'S AGONY. SHE RECEIVED THE GIFT OF BILOCATION IN ORDER TO COMFORT ONE OF HER DAUGHTERS IN HER AGONY

"For many years, nearly every night before I fell asleep," she says, "when I recommended myself to God, that I might sleep in peace, I used always to think a little of this mystery of the prayer in the Garden—yea, even before I was a nun, because I had been told that many indulgences were to be gained thereby. For my part, I believe that my soul gained very much in this way, because I began to practise prayer without knowing what it was; and now that it had become my constant habit, I was saved from omitting it, as I was from omitting to bless myself with the sign of the cross before I slept." (*Life written by herself*, ch. ix.)

Let us now relate briefly a very strange incident in the life of St Teresa:

"In January, 1574, she left with regret the monastery of Salamanca, where Sr Isabel of the Angels, a young religious of great sanctity, was sinking gradually and almost dying. She lingered thus for several months, suffering great interior anguish. Amid fears, darkness and desolate dryness of the soul, she united herself with Jesus agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemani.

"The nuns were filled with compassion at seeing their beloved sister in such a hopeless condition. At this time St Teresa was at Segovia. God permitted her to go in person to the aid of the distressed patient, and work a miracle on her behalf, thus acting the part of the consoling angel.

"On June 11, Sister Isabel's last day on earth, the holy Mother, at Segovia, was for an hour unconscious, motionless and speechless, to the great astonishment of the sisters who surrounded her. Meanwhile, in Salamanca, the community went to the infirmary to see the young invalid; to their intense surprise they found her joyful and serene. 'Mother,' she said privately to Mother Ann of Jesus, the Mistress of Novices: 'Mother, today all my pains will be over, and I shall enjoy the bliss which I long for.' The

mistress questioned her as to the cause of so great a change in her state of mind; she answered: 'During Mass, our Mother Teresa of Jesus came and paid me a visit. She blessed and caressed me. Passing her hand over my face she encouraged me with the most motherly words. "Do not fear, my daughter," she said. "Care not for all these troubles; put your confidence in what your Spouse did and suffered for the sake of your soul; he has great bliss in store for you, and this very day you will enjoy it." 'At once,' added the sister, 'all my anxieties vanished, and so great is my joy that it seems to me I am already enjoying what I hope for.' During Matins, Isabel of the Angels, radiant with peace, breathed her last.

"Later on, St Teresa confessed to Mother Ann of Jesus that she really had been rapt in spirit to the bedside of the dying nun, and addressed her in the words quoted." *Cf. Life of the Venerable Mother Ann of Jesus,* by Maurique. (Deposition of the Venerable Mother Ann for the Beatification of St Teresa.)

THIRD MEDITATION

OUR LORD SCOURGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

PRELUDE.—I was once with a person [1]—it was at the very beginning of my acquaintance with her—when Christ [in the state he was in after having been scourged] stood before me, stern and grave, giving me to understand what in my conduct was offensive to him. Sometimes I saw him crowned with thorns. [2] Once, when I was looking upon him, I saw that he had on his head, instead of the crown of thorns, a crown of great splendour over the part where the wounds of that crown must have been. Our Lord told me not to be sad because of those wounds, but for the many wounds which men inflicted upon him now.

FIRST POINT

See your Lord bound to the column, full of sufferings; [3] his flesh all torn to pieces because of his tender love for you—persecuted by some, spit upon by others, denied and deserted by his friends, with none to plead for him. He is stiff with the cold, and in such utter loneliness that you may well console one another. [4] Consider the sufferings he then endured, for whom he endured them, who he is who endured them, and the love with which he bore them. Sometimes remain there with Christ, in the silence of the understanding. Employ yourself in looking upon him who is looking upon you; accompany him, make your petitions to him, humble yourself and delight yourself in Christ, and keep in mind that you never deserved to be there.

One day I saw a representation of Christ most grievously wounded, and so devotional, that the very sight of it moved me—so well did it show forth what he suffered for us. [5] So

[1] *Life*, ch. vii.
[2] Ch. xxix.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvi.
[4] Ch. xiii.
[5] Ch. ix.

keenly did I feel the evil return I had made for those wounds, that I thought my heart was breaking. I threw myself on the ground beside it, my tears flowing plenteously, and implored him to strengthen me once for all, so that I might never offend him any more. I said to our Lord that I would not rise until he granted my petition. I sincerely believe that this was of great service to me, because I have grown better ever since.

Second Point

Address yourself to the Eternal Father, saying: Think, O God, should such stripes and insults and such bitter torments be forgotten?[1] When we beg of thee honours, income, riches, any worldly thing, do not listen to us, but how shouldst thou not hear us when we ask for what concerns the honour of thy Son? Why, O Eternal Father, shouldst thou refuse those who would lose a thousand honours and a thousand lives for thee? Not for our sakes, O God, for we deserve it not, but for the sake of thy Son and of his merits. Must this most meek and loving Lamb atone anew for every fresh sin we commit? Do not suffer it, my Sovereign King; let thy Majesty be appeased; look not on our faults, but on thy most holy Son who has redeemed us.

On reflecting, O my God![2] on the glory prepared by thee for those who persevere in doing thy will, and on the many labours and pains with which thy Son purchased us this glory—remembering our unworthiness and our obligation to be grateful for this immense love, which, at so dear a cost to self, taught us how to love—my soul is wrung with anguish. How is it possible, Lord, to forget those mercies, as souls forget them when offending thee?

Third Point

His Majesty has been to me a veritable book, in which I saw all truth.[3] Blessed be such a book, which leaves behind

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. iii.
[2] *Exclamations*, iii.
[3] *Life, ch.* xxvi.

an impression of what is read therein, and in such a way that it cannot be forgotten. Who can look upon our Lord covered with wounds, and bowed down under persecutions, without accepting, loving and longing for them?

Even if I try, I cannot pray to God for rest or desire it, for I see that his life was one of suffering, and that I ask him to send me, giving me first the grace to bear it. I would have my life full of great tribulations and persecutions; now that I am unprofitable, I should like to suffer; and I would endure all the tribulations in the world to gain ever so little more merit—I mean, by a more perfect doing of his will.

Colloquy

O my Lord![1] For my sake didst thou come to earth; for my sake didst thou undergo so many trials; for me wast thou scourged with many stripes. Let me not forget how thou camest into the world for sinners' sakes, didst purchase us by such a precious ransom, expiating our evil pleasures by agonizing torments and scourging.[2] Thou hast cured my blindness by the blindfolding of thy sacred eyes and healed my vanity by the cruel crown of thorns. Give us grace to understand how much we cost thee; that "the servant is not above his lord";[3] and that we must toil for thee if we would enjoy thy glory.[4]

Resolution

If His Majesty proved his love for us by such stupendous labours and sufferings, how can we seek to please him by words alone.

READING

A Painting of our Lord scourged, executed according to St Teresa's Directions. A Vision granted to her

The Saint, being at St Joseph of Avila, caused to be painted in fresco on the wall of a hermitage a life-size picture

[1] *Exclamations*, iv. [2] *Exclamations*, iii.
[3] *Nec servus super dominum suum* (Matt. x 24).
[4] *Interior Castle*, IInd Mansion.

of our Lord bound to the pillar of flagellation, exactly as he appeared to her at the convent of the Incarnation before her conversion to a perfect life. Mother Isabel of St Dominic has deposed as follows concerning it:

"The holy Mother had our Lord thus represented, after having spent many hours in prayer on the subject and having explained to the artist what he had to do. She even gave directions as to the cords and wounds, as well as the face, the hair, and especially a shred of flesh at the left arm, near the elbow. I heard from some of the religious present that when the painting was done, the Saint, on drawing near to examine it, fell into an ecstasy in presence of the painter, being unable to prevent it.

"The painting was a perfect success and very devotional. Evidently she who presided at its execution was full of fervour. It arouses devotion in all who look at it. When I said so one day to the Saint, she answered: 'I can certify, my daughter, that it cost me hours of prayer. But God had given me a strong desire that the subject should be successfully represented. May he be praised for having been reduced to such a state for love of us! I am very happy that the religious of this convent enjoy this consolation."

Mother Isabel of St Dominic adds: "The Saint seemed to foretell the extraordinary effects our Lord has worked by means of this painting and the marvels of grace the religious daily experience in their souls when visiting this hermitage." (*Inform. of Segovia.*)

"One Corpus Christi evening," declares Mother Mary Baptist, "our holy Mother saw our Lord Jesus Christ coming out of the monstrance and advancing towards her, his head streaming with blood. He said in accents full of grief: 'Look at the state to which I am reduced by those in authority in my Church.' I do not remember whether he charged her to tell this to them, but I know she informed a Prelate, who drew great profit from it." (*Inform. of Valladolid.*)

FOURTH MEDITATION

MORTIFICATION

PRELUDE.—For the love of God, Christians, let us exert ourselves, and leave our reason and our fears in his hands, paying no attention to the weaknesses of nature which might retard us.[1] If the devil once begins to daunt us with the fear of losing our health, we shall never do anything.[2]

FIRST POINT

The body possesses this defect—the more you give it, the more it requires.[3] It is wonderful how fond it is of comfort, and what pretexts it will offer to obtain it, however little needed: it deceives the unfortunate soul, and prevents its making progress.[4] Our hearts are so mean, that we think the earth would fail under our feet, if we were to cease to care even for a moment for the body, and give ourselves up to spirituality. Now, to me, this way of going on seems to betray a disposition to reconcile soul and body together, in order that we may not miss our ease in this world, and yet have the fruition of God in the next; and so it will be if we walk according to justice, clinging to virtue; but it is the pace of a hen—it will never bring us to liberty of spirit. I by no means wish for such a method of progress, neither can I be made to believe it to be sound; for I have tried it, and I should have remained in that way, if our Lord in his goodness had not taught me another and a shorter road.

When it pleased God to let me find out the device of Satan,[5] I used to say to the latter when he suggested to me that I was ruining my health, that my death was of no consequence; when he suggested rest, I replied that I did not want rest, but the Cross. His other suggestions I treated

[1] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. ii.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. x.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xi.
[4] *Life*, ch. xi.
[5] *Life*, xiii.

in the same way. I saw clearly that in most things, though I was really very sickly, it was either a temptation of Satan, or a weakness on my part. My health has been much better since I have ceased to look after my ease and comforts.

Second Point

If, by reason of our weakness, we cannot in all things make our lives consistent with that of the Saints,[1] we should be very cautious about those things which neither injure nor sustain life; for, after all, it is only a little pleasant labour, and if we make up our minds to bear it, all the difficulty is past, for the whole pain is but a little in the beginning.

Believe me, Christians, when once we begin to subdue our wretched bodies, they do not trouble us so much.[2] It is enough to see to what is needful. Do not desire anything extra, unless it is absolutely necessary. Unless we resolve, once for all, to resign ourselves to death and ill-health, we shall never do anything. Endeavour to lose all fear of them, and to leave everything in God's hands, come what may. What does it matter if we die? How many times have not our bodies mocked us? Let us mock them for once. Trust me, this resolution is more important than can be realized, for by keeping faithfully to it, and practising it little by little, until it becomes a habit, with the grace of God you shall vanquish the flesh, and you will experience the truth of what I say. Victory over such an enemy goes far to carry us through the battle of life. May God grant it to us, since he has the power, and we need his grace in all things: may he bring it to pass for his own sake. I am certain that only those who rejoice in this conquest can estimate its value, which is so great that I believe no one will regret any sufferings that have been endured in order to gain such peace and self-command.

[1] *Foundations*, ch. xiv.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xi.

Third Point

And now, why do we draw back from interior mortification, [1] which is the mainspring of all the rest, by which they become more meritorious and perfect, and are finally performed with sweetness and peace? This interior mortification, as I said, is acquired little by little, through never following our own will or liking, even in the most trifling matters, until we have subdued the body to the spirit. I repeat that this is entirely, or at least mainly, accomplished by renouncing all care for ourselves and our own pleasure.

We must learn to cross our wills in everything; although we may not succeed at once, yet little by little, by the help of prayer, without knowing how, we shall reach the summit.

But how rigorous it sounds to say that we must never please ourselves, unless we are told of the consolation this self-denial brings with it, and of the security it obtains during this life! In the spiritual life, all seems at first an enormous work, as indeed it is, being a warfare carried on against ourselves; yet, when once we begin it, God so works in our souls, bestowing on them numerous graces, that all we can do in this life seems but a trifle.

Colloquy

O Lord! I dare not abstain from serving thee, yet my service contents me not, nor acquits aught of the debt I owe. [2] Fain would I give myself wholly to thy service, yet, looking on my misery, I see that I am incapable of good, unless thou first give it me. Alas! my true Lord and King, I am incapable even to suffer, unaided by thy sovereign power and majesty, but with these I can do all things!

Resolution

Fix your eyes on the crucified one, and all will seem easy. [3]

[1] Ch. xii. [2] *Exclamations*, vi.
[3] *Interior Castle*, viith Mansion, ch. iv.

READING

How St Teresa practised Mortification

Let us first see how she started on her career of penance. Speaking of her first confessor of the Company of Jesus, Father John of Pradanos, she says :

" I communicated the whole state of my soul to that servant of God, and he was a great servant of his, and very prudent. He understood all I told him, explained it to me, and encouraged me greatly. He said that all was very evidently the work of the Spirit of God : only it was necessary for me to go back again to my prayer, because I was not well grounded, and had not begun to understand what mortification meant—that was true, for I do not think I knew it even by name ; that I was by no means to give up prayer ; on the contrary, I was to do violence to myself in order to practise it, because God had bestowed on me such special graces that it made it impossible for me to say whether it was or was not the will of our Lord to do good to many through me. He went further, for he seems to have prophesied of that which our Lord afterwards did with me, and said that I should be very much to blame if I did not correspond with the graces which God bestowed on me. It seems to me that the Holy Ghost was speaking by his mouth in order to heal my soul, so deep was the impression he made." (*Life by herself*, ch. xxvi.)

" About the time St Teresa was living in the monastery of the Incarnation, Fr. Ribera relates that when her maladies left her some respite, she practised such severe penance that her confessors had to restrain her.

" She was always much inclined to mortification, for which she greatly longed, as can be seen by her Constitutions and by the rigorous penance she introduced into her Order. She herself practised it constantly unless prevented on account of her infirmities. She often overtaxed her strength because of the great consolation she derived from mortification. She grieved deeply during illness, and occasionally shed tears, on account of the restrictions which prevented her doing penance.

" When staying at St Joseph of Avila, she took disciplines

which drew blood, not to speak of the ordinary ones. But this seemed to her as nothing. So vehement were her desires of penance, that she would have readily torn her body to pieces had it been conformable to the will of God. She used disciplines of nettles, which caused wounds that she renewed by disciplines of the same kind. However sick and full of pains she might be, she did not forget to do penance. This lasted until she broke her arm, which accident made her condescend a little to her body's necessities.

"She slept on a straw bed without mattress. Her diet was always exceedingly scanty. She did not drink wine. After having founded her first convent, when ill, she used to eat some wheaten cakes, and an egg, or some vegetable. She also ate walnuts and raisins, and a little fish." (Book iv, ch. xviii.)

"She observed the fasts with great exactitude," said Mother Isabel of St Dominic. "She fasted during the seven months prescribed by the Rule, namely, from the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross till Easter, as well as on all Fridays of the year and other fasts of the Order. She would never eat flesh meat, except when grievously ill, and her illness had to be very severe before her doctor and confessors could persuade her to do so." (*Process of Avila.*)

"In spite of her age and infirmities," said Mother Ann of Jesus, "we never saw her neglect penance, either public or private, unless she was confined to her bed by some serious sickness. She always wore the inner woollen tunic, and used no linen sheet on her bed. We heard her take severe disciplines, besides those she took with the community: we several times discovered chains, disciplines and hair-cloths of very rude kind, which she kept hidden, and she was much displeased when we told her we had seen them.

"Even when she sat down she took care to do so in an uncomfortable position, in order never to be without some mortification. She was wont to speak to us of the glory penance gives to God, and said that if it were only to imitate Jesus Christ, who had not one hour of comfort in his life, we ought to practise it unceasingly." (*Process of Salamanca.*)

SEVENTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

OUR LORD CARRYING HIS CROSS AND CRUCIFIED

PRELUDE.—One day, while I was hearing Mass, I saw Christ on the Cross at the elevation of the Host.[1] Another day our Lord said to me: "Thou knowest of the betrothal between thee and myself, and therefore all I have is thine; and so I give thee all the labours and sorrows I endured, and thou canst therefore ask of my Father as if they were thine." Though I have heard that we are partakers therein, now it was in a way so different that it seemed as if I had become possessed of a great principality, for the affection with which he wrought this grace cannot be described.

FIRST POINT

Look, faithful souls, on your Saviour laden with the Cross, and not allowed to stay to take breath.[2] He will gaze at you with those beautiful, compassionate eyes, brimming with tears, and will forget his own grief to solace yours, only because you went to comfort him and turned towards him.

"O Prince of all the earth, thou who art indeed my spouse!" you may say, if your heart has been so melted at seeing him in this state that not only do you look at him, but you feel delight in speaking to him (not in any fixed form of prayer, but out of your compassion, which greatly touches him); "art thou reduced to such sore straits, my Lord, my only Good, that thou art willing to consort with such a miserable comrade as myself? Yet thy looks tell me that thou findest some comfort, even in me. How can it be that thou art forsaken by the angels, and that thy Father

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxviii. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvi.

consoles thee not? If it be thy will to suffer thus for me, what do I suffer for thee in return? Of what have I to complain? Shame at seeing thee in such plight shall make me endure all the trials that may come to me: I will count them gain that I may imitate thee in something. Let us go together, Lord: 'whither thou goest, I will go,' and I will follow where thou hast passed."

Never mind if the Jews trample you under foot, if only you can save him any pain. Take no notice of what is said to you; shut your ears to all murmurings; stumble and fall with your Spouse, but do not draw back from the Cross nor abandon it, but often recall his weariness, and how much harder his labours are than yours, however great you may fancy them to be, and whatever pain they cause you. This will console you: you will go away comforted, seeing that they are but trifles compared with what our Lord bore.

Second Point

Would you have stood at the foot of the Cross with the Magdalene, who had the risk of death before her eyes? What must have been the sufferings of the glorious virgin and of this blessed Saint! What threats, what evil words, what insolence, what shocks and pain! The rude populace they had to deal with were truly fiendish, being the devil's own instruments. Terrible must have been their ordeal, yet it was effaced by a still more bitter pain.

Our good Jesus showed human weakness before his sufferings, yet he was intrepid when plunged into the midst of them, for not only did he utter no complaint, but he showed no weakness in the way he bore them.[1] On entering the Garden he said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."[2] Yet while dying on the Cross he never murmured. He went to wake his Apostles during the prayer in the Garden, but he had better cause to speak of his pain to his mother while she watched at the foot of the Cross, for she did not sleep—

[1] *Concept.*, ch. ii.
[2] *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem* (Matt. xxvi 38).

her soul suffered and died a bitter death. Yet the greatest consolation is to be found in seeking sympathy from those we know share our sorrows and love us most deeply.

Alas, alas, alas![1] What a terrible evil is sin, which caused a death of such agony to God himself! And you, living waters springing from the wounds of my God, how abundantly you ever flow to sustain us![2] Safely, indeed, will he who drinks eagerly of this divine draught traverse the dangers of this wretched life.

Third Point

Our Lord said to me one day: "Consider my wounds; thy pains will never reach to them. This is the way of truth; thus shalt thou help me to weep over the ruin of those who are in the world, for thou knowest how all their desires, anxieties and thoughts tend the other way."[3]

It is a shame! And, in truth, I am ashamed of myself; if shame could have a place in heaven, I should certainly be the most ashamed there.[4] Why do we seek blessings and joys so great, bliss without end, and all at the cost of our good Jesus? Shall we not at least weep with the daughters of Jerusalem, if we do not help to carry his Cross with the Cyrenean? Is it by pleasure and idle amusements that we can attain to the fruition of what he purchased with so much blood? It is impossible. Can we think that we can, by preserving our honour, which is vanity, recompense him for the sufferings he endured, that we might reign with him for ever? This is not the way; we are going by the wrong road utterly, and we shall never arrive there.

Colloquy

Oh, how little do we trust thee, Lord![5] What precious riches and treasures didst thou entrust to us—the three-and-thirty years of thy Son's sufferings, his death and agony, and thy Son himself. And these didst thou bestow on us

[1] *Exclamations* x.
[2] *Exclamations,* ix.
[3] *Relations,* iv.
[4] *Life,* ch. xxvii.
[5] *Exclamations,* xii.

centuries before we were born, knowing at the time that we should repay thee nothing; yet thou didst not hesitate to consign to us this inestimable treasure wherewith, if we augment its value by the aid of thy Son, we can purchase eternal happiness from thee, O compassionate Father!

Look not on our blindness, my God, but on the streams of blood shed by thy Son for us.[1] Let thy mercy shine forth amid such monstrous wickedness. Remember, Lord, we are "the work of thy hands"[2]; succour us by thy goodness and mercy!

Resolution

Desire with all your heart to suffer for Christ on every occasion and in every way.[3]

READING

Two Favours regarding the Passion granted to St Teresa

"I was once importuning our Lord exceedingly to restore the sight of a person who had claims upon me, and who was almost wholly blind. I was very sorry for him, and afraid our Lord would not hear me because of my sins. He appeared to me as at other times, and began to show the wound in his left hand; with the other he drew out the great nail that was in it, and it seemed to me that, in drawing the nail, he tore the flesh. The greatness of the pain was manifest, and I was very much distressed thereat.

"He said to me that he who had borne that for my sake would still more readily grant what I asked him, and that I was not to have any doubt about it. He promised me there was nothing I should ask that he would not grant; that he knew I should ask nothing that was not for his glory, and that he would grant me what I was now praying for. Even during the time I did not serve him, I should find, if I considered it,

[1] *Exclamations*, viii.
[2] *Opera manuum tuarum omnes nos* (Isa. lxiv 8).
[3] *Maxims*.

I had asked nothing that he had not granted in more ample manner than I had known how to ask; how much more amply still would he grant what I had asked for, now that he knew I loved him! I was not to doubt.

"I do not think that eight days passed before our Lord restored that person's sight. My confessor knew it forthwith. It might be that it was not owing to my prayer, but, as I had the vision, I have a certain conviction that it was a grace accorded to me. I gave thanks to His Majesty.

"Again, a person was exceedingly ill of a most painful disease; but, as I do not know what it was, I do not describe it by its name here. What he had gone through for two months was beyond all endurance, and his pain was so great that he tore his own flesh. My confessor, the rector of whom I have spoken, went to see him; he was very sorry for him, and told me that I must anyhow go to visit him; he was one whom I might visit, for he was my kinsman. I went, and was moved to such a tender compassion for him that I began, with the utmost importunity, to ask our Lord to restore him to health. Herein I saw clearly how gracious our Lord was to me, so far as I could judge; for immediately, the next day, he was completely rid of that pain.

"On one occasion, when I was holding in my hand the cross of my rosary, our Lord took it from me into his own hand. He returned it; but it was then four large stones incomparably more precious than diamonds; for nothing can be compared with what is supernatural. Diamonds seem counterfeits and imperfect when compared with these precious stones. The five wounds were delineated on them with most admirable art. He said to me, that for the future that cross would appear so to me always, and so it did. I never saw the wood of which it was made, but only the precious stones. They were seen, however, by no one else—only by myself." (*Life written by herself,* ch. xxxix and xxix.)

SECOND MEDITATION

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

PRELUDE.—Look at Jesus Christ, persecuted by some, spit upon by others, denied and deserted by his friends, and on the other hand, think of the mercy and patience of God towards sinners.[1]

FIRST POINT

After having meditated, Christians, on the infinite mercy and patience of God in not casting us down to hell at once when we sin,[2] let us be ashamed of resenting anything done or said against us, *we* who are the scum of the earth, when we see what outrages are offered to *God*, our *Creator*, within his very being, by us his creatures; yet we are wounded whenever we hear of an unkind word having been spoken of us in our absence, although perhaps with no evil intention. Oh, misery of mankind! When shall we imitate Almighty God in any way? Oh, let us not think we are doing great things if we suffer injuries *patiently*; rather let us bear them with *alacrity*; let us love our enemies, since this great God has not ceased to love us, in spite of our many sins! This is, indeed, the chief reason that all should forgive any harm done to them.

Notice, Christian souls, that Christ said, "Forgive us our trespasses *as we have forgiven our debtors*," to show that it is a thing we have already done.[3] Thus look well if, after receiving special favours in prayer, you feel a firm determination to forgive others, and if occasion offers, you do not actually pardon any injury, serious as it may be. I am not speaking of the trifles people call injuries, for these do not affect a soul that God raises to so high a prayer, nor does it care whether it is highly esteemed or no.

[1] *Way of Perfection* ch. xxvi.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. x.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xx.

Such souls soon gain vigour, if not in the other virtues, at least in this of forgiving injuries. I cannot believe that one who has approached so near to the source of all mercy, which has shown the soul what it really is, and all that God has pardoned it, would not instantly and willingly forgive, and be at peace, and remain well affected towards anyone who has offended it. For the divine kindness and mercy shown it prove the immense love felt for it by the Almighty, and it is overjoyed to have an opportunity of showing love in return.

Second Point

Let Christian souls notice that the two things asked in our name by Christ of his Father—yielding up our will and forgiving others—apply to everybody.[1] It is true that there are degrees in the way of carrying them out—perfect souls resign their will perfectly and pardon wrongs with perfection. The soul united with God cares little for censure, which even pleases it and sounds like harmonious music to the ears.[2] This is perfectly true; the soul is rather strengthened than depressed by these trials, experience having taught it the great advantages derived from them. It does not think men offend God in persecuting it, but that he permits them to do so for its greater gain. So strong is this belief, that such a person bears a special affection for these people, holding them as true friends and greater benefactors than those who speak well of her.

I say again, she feels a great interior joy when persecuted, and is far more peaceful than in the former state under such circumstances; she bears no grudge against her enemies, nor wishes them any ill.[3] Indeed, she has a special love for them, is deeply grieved at seeing them in trouble, and does all she can to relieve them, earnestly interceding with God on their behalf. She would be glad to forfeit the favours His Majesty shows her, if they might be given to her enemies instead, to prevent their offending our Lord. Indeed, the

[1] Ch. xxxvii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. i.
[3] VIIth Mansion, ch. iii.

love she bears for enemies would be incredible unless proved by facts.[1]

Third Point

We see why the Saints rejoiced in injuries and persecutions,[2] for thereby they had some payment to offer God when they made this petition: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But what could such poor sinners as myself do, who have so little to forgive and so much to be forgiven? We ought to think over this very seriously, Christian souls; it is so grave and so important a matter that God should pardon us miserable creatures our sins, which merit eternal fire, that we must pardon all offences committed against us, which are not really affronts, nor anything at all.

As for myself and the evil-speaking directed against me, which is considerable and highly injurious to me, and done by many, I think that what they say makes scarcely any more impression upon me than it would upon an idiot.[3] I think at times, and nearly always, that it is just. I feel it so little, that I see nothing in it that I might offer to God, as I learn by experience that my soul gains greatly thereby; on the contrary, the evil-speaking seems to me a favour. And thus, the first time I go to prayer, I have no ill feeling against them; the first time I hear of it, it creates in me a little resistance, but it neither disturbs nor moves me; on the contrary, when I see others occasionally disturbed, I am sorry for them. So it is, I put myself out of the question; for all the wrongs in this life seem to me so light, that it is not possible to feel them, because I imagine myself to be dreaming, and see that all this will be nothing when I awake.

Colloquy

O Lord! how is it possible to wrong, either by word or deed, such a one as I am, who in simple justice deserves to be

[1] *Concept.*, ch. vi.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvi.
[3] *Spiritual Relation*, ii.

treated unkindly in this world and tortured by the devils in the next?' Thus it is, O my God! that I have no other gift to offer thee, whereby I might plead that thou shouldst remit my debts. 'Thy Son must forgive me, for no one has done me any real injustice; therefore I have nothing to pardon in return. Accept my wish to pardon others, O God! for I believe that I could forgive my neighbour anything since thou dost pardon me, or that I might fulfil thy will unreservedly—yet, when it comes to the test, if I were unjustly accused, I know not what I might do. But in thine eyes I am so guilty that all the evil men could say of me would fall far short of the truth, although those who see not all which thou knowest might think that I have been injured. Therefore, O my Father, thou must indeed forgive me *freely*, and all praise is due to thee for bearing patiently with one so poor as I am. When thy most blessed Son promised thee this repayment from other men, he left out my name because I was utterly destitute. But, O my God! are there not other souls which, like mine, have never grasped this truth? If there are, I beg them, in my name, to remember it, and to ignore the trifling matters which they call affronts, lest, in their care for points of honour, they resemble children building houses out of straw.

Resolution

Let us form a resolution to bear injuries and the suffering of them, although they wound us.

READING

How St Teresa forgave Injuries

If we depended wholly on certain words of our Saint we might believe that she had very little to forgive, which would be a mistake.

"Mother Teresa," wrote Fr Ribera, "had to endure many affronts against her honour, yet she did not speak for any honour, but that of God and that which she needed

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxvi.

to magnify his holy name and to labour for his service. Many persons ridiculed her prayer and revelations, others believed she was possessed by the devil and spoke of exorcising her. The slanders which she had to bear during this turmoil surpass anyone's imagination." (Book iv, ch. viii.)

"Many of the nuns in her convent of the Incarnation," said Fr Peter Ibanez, "spoke ill of her, which she felt keenly, not having reached the perfection she attained afterwards. However, our Lord granted her great serenity of mind and a certainty that she had nothing to fear."

Let us see what the Saint wrote about her own dispositions at that time:

"Thou knowest, O my Lord, that I have often cried unto thee, making excuses for those who murmured against me; for I thought they had reason on their side. This I did then when thou of thy goodness hadst kept me back from offending thee so much, and when I was departing from everything which I thought displeasing unto thee. It was when I did this that thou, O Lord, didst begin to lay open thy treasures for thy servant. It seemed as if thou wert looking for nothing else but that I should be willing and ready to receive them; accordingly, thou didst begin at once, not only to give them, but also to make others know that thou wert giving them.

"When this was known, there began to prevail a good opinion of her of whom all had not yet clearly understood how wicked she was, though much of that wickedness was plain enough. Calumny and persecution began at once, and, as I think, with good reason; so I looked on none of them as an enemy, but made my supplication to thee, imploring thee to consider the grounds they had. They said that I wished to be a Saint, and that I invented novelties; but I had not then attained in many things even to the observance of my rule; nor had I come near those excellent and holy nuns who were in the house—and I do not believe I ever shall, if God of his goodness will not do that for me himself; on the contrary, I was there only to do away with what was good, and introduce customs which were not good; at least, I did what I could to bring them in, and I

was very powerful for evil. Thus it was that they were blameless, when they blamed me. I do not mean the nuns only, but that others as well; they told me truths; for it was thy will". (*Life written by herself*, ch. xix.)

Later on, events connected with the Calced Carmelites manifested her dispositions clearly. "While we were endeavouring to establish our reformation as a separate Province," Mother Mary of St Jerome relates, "such were the artifices and plots laid by Satan in order to oppose this design, that the holy Mother needed all the perfection God had bestowed on her to be able to bear them. Indeed, not only did the enemy endeavour to prevent the Province from being established, but he strove to destroy the houses already founded; he therefore tried to discredit the nuns and their Mother, instigating detestable slanders and calumnies against them.

"On hearing of the accusations made in order to ruin the work that had cost her so dearly, the holy Mother remained peaceful. She used to laugh at the charges brought against her. Whatever might be said, I never saw her offended or disturbed or in the least moved. Indeed, she showed great affection for those who opposed her and prayed for them most earnestly. She went still further. I heard her say that all this caused her real joy, as her face testified.

"The annoyance caused by her friends was far from being her lightest trial, for, coming as it did from good people, it brought her bitter confusion. Sometimes she said they were right and she was wrong. But it was in vain they tormented her. Her words were always edifying. She used to declare that these persons were holy, as were their actions. All this occurred during the two years of the fiercest persecution." (*Relation on the Virtues of St Teresa.*)

Father Peter of the Purification, Discalced Carmelite wrote on the same subject:

"When the holy Mother was told of the crimes she had been charged with, she used to say in a cheerful, gentle manner: 'All those who accused me were of the greatest benefit to me.' And one time amid others: 'I give you

my word, Father,' she said, 'that whenever I hear that anyone has spoken ill of me, I pray God for him, and beseech our Lord to keep his heart, mouth and hands free from any offence against him. Then I look on my accuser not as bearing ill-will against me, but as a minister of God, chosen by the Holy Ghost as intermediary to do me good and help me to save my soul.' She added: 'Believe me, Father, the best and strongest weapon to conquer heaven is patience in trials. By it man is made possessor and lord of his own soul, as Christ said to his Apostles.'

"In fact, neither her sublime practice of virtue and perfection, nor her prayer and contemplation, nor her raptures, ecstasies and visions, nor the burning charity which filled her soul, ever moved me to such admiration as this divine gift of patience that shone in her. And nobody must suppose that her patience was exercised only in light matters not affecting her honour. On the contrary, the most grievous calumnies had been brought against her, and numberless falsehoods sent to Rome.

"I remember once, when reminding her of a certain truly awful slander, she laughed and said: 'I should have done much worse had not our Lord held me by his holy hand. What in this matter is to be dreaded and what I feel most keenly is the harm that the person who utters such words is doing to his own soul. I would readily endure many injuries and torments that he might cease offending God. People who are falsely accused are not really hurt, but have an opportunity of gaining merit.'" (*Declaration on the Virtues of St Teresa.*)

The care the Saint and her nuns took to pray in a very special manner for their opponents and enemies was well known. In a town of Spain, a certain nobleman vexed and annoyed the Discalced Carmelite nuns by words, and as far as possible by deeds. St Teresa asked him why, having been their benefactor, he was dealing in such a manner with persons who prayed for him. "Because," he said, "I wish them to pray for me both as a benefactor and an evil-doer." St Teresa is said to have been delighted with the answer. (*Declaration of Mary of St Angelus, Process of Segovia.*)

THIRD MEDITATION

OBEDIENCE

PRELUDE.—Whenever our Lord commanded me to do one thing in prayer, and my confessor forbade it, our Lord himself told me to obey my confessor.[1] He said to me once, that there was no obedience where there was no resolution to suffer; that I was to think of his sufferings, and then everything would be easy.

FIRST POINT

Experience has shown me—setting that aside which I have read in many places—the great blessing it is for a soul never to withdraw from obedience.[2] Herein lie, in my opinion, growth in goodness and the gaining of humility. Herein lies our security amidst the doubts whether we are straying from the heavenly road, which, as mortal men, it is right we should have while we are living here on earth. Herein is found that rest which is so dear to souls desirous of pleasing God; for, if they have really resigned themselves to holy obedience, and have made their understanding captive thereto, seeking no other will but that of their confessor, and if religious, that of their superior, Satan refrains from assailing them with his continual suspicions, seeing that he loses rather than gains thereby. Moreover, our restless movements, fond of having their own way, and even of making the reason subject to them in those things which can give us pleasure, cease, we being reminded that the will is definitely given up to the will of God, through that subjection of self to him who stands in his place.

As regards religious persons, I cannot understand what anyone is doing in a monastery if, after she has made a vow of obedience, she does not fulfil it as perfectly as possible.[3]

[1] *Life* ch. xxvi.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xviii.
[3] *Foundations*, Prologue.

I can assure her that while she fails in this, she will never reach contemplation, nor even lead the active life well: of this I am certain. Those who have not undertaken this obligation, but who wish to be contemplatives, must, if they would walk in safety, resolutely submit their will to an experienced confessor. It is a well-known fact that they will thus make more progress in a year than they would otherwise have done in a very long time.

Second Point

Wherein lies the highest perfection?[1] It is clear that it does not lie in interior delights, nor in great raptures, nor in visions, nor in the spirit of prophecy, but in the conformity of our will to the will of God, so that there shall be nothing we know he wills that we do not will ourselves with our whole will, and accept the bitter as joyfully as the sweet, knowing it to be His Majesty's will.

This seems to be very hard to do; not the mere doing of it, but in being pleased with the doing of that which, according to our nature, is wholly and in every way against our will; and certainly so it is; but love, if perfect, is strong enough to do it, and we forget our own pleasure in order to please him who loves us so much. And truly it is so, for our sufferings, however great they may be, are sweet when we note that we are giving pleasure unto God; and it is in this way they love who have attained to this state by persecutions, by dishonour, and by wrongs. This is so certain, and remains so plain and evident, that there is no reason why I should dwell upon it.

What I am showing is the reason, in my opinion, why obedience furnishes the readiest or the best way for arriving at so blessed a state. That reason is this. As we are never absolute masters of our own will, so as to employ it purely and simply for God, till we subject it wholly to reason, obedience is the true means of bringing about that subjection; which can never be brought about by much reason-

[1] *Foundations*, ch. v.

ing, because our nature and self-love can furnish so much on their side, that we shall never come to an end, and very often will make that which is most reasonable, if we have no liking for it, seem folly because we have no inclination to do it. There is so much to be said of this inward struggle, that we shall never come to the end, and so many are the means which Satan, the world and our flesh employ in order to warp our reason. Is there, then, any help for it? Yes; as in a very doubtful question of law men go to an arbitrator, and, weary of pleading, put the matter in his hands, so let the soul go to someone, whether it be the superior or the confessor, fully bent on pleading no further or thinking of its cause, but relying on the words of our Lord, who saith, "He that heareth you, heareth me," regardless of its own will. Our Lord makes much of this submission, and justly so, for we make him thereby Master of the free will he has given us. At last, painfully or not, we do it, and our Lord on his part helps us so much, that as we submit our will and reason for his sake, so he makes us masters of them both.

Third Point

We, then, being masters of ourselves, are able to give ourselves perfectly to God, offering to him a pure will that he may unite to his own, praying him to send down from heaven the fire of his love to consume the sacrifice, and putting everything away that may be displeasing unto him: for now there is nothing more for us to do, seeing that, although with much labour, we have laid our offering on the altar, which, so far as it lies in our power, no longer touches the earth.

It is clear that no man can give that which he does not possess, as it is necessary he should have it before he can give it. Believe me, there is no better way of finding this treasure than that of toiling and digging so as to draw it forth out of the mine of obedience; for the more we dig the more we shall find, and the more we subject ourselves to men, having no other will but that of those who are over us, the more we shall master our will so as to conform it

to the will of God. This is the preparation for attaining to that true union, which is that of making our own will one with the will of God. This is the union I desire, and would have you all possess, Christian souls, and not certain raptures, full of delight, to which some are liable, and which they call union. Those raptures may be union, if, when they are over, they are followed by obedience; but if after the raptures there ensues but scanty obedience, and self-will remains, this soul, as it seems to me, will be joined to self-love and not to the will of God.

It is through obedience also that souls find themselves in possession of that liberty of spirit, so prized and so desired, which the perfect have, and wherein lies all the happiness that can be wished for in this life; for seeking nothing, they possess all things. Such souls fear nothing, and desire nothing on earth; no troubles disturb them, no pleasures touch them; in a word, nobody can rob them of their peace, for it rests on God alone, and, as nobody can rob them of him, nothing but the fear of losing him can give them any pain; for everything else in this world is, in their opinion, as if it were not, because it can neither make nor mar their happiness. O blessed obedience, by which we gain so much!

Colloquy

O God![1] thou wilt not allow a soul who loves thee ardently to walk by any other way than that which chose for himself he who rendered himself obedient unto death.[2] Henceforth, Lord, I desire to forget self, to seek only how to serve thee, and to have no other will but thine.[3] But, alas! my strength has no power! Thou art all-powerful, my God! All that I can give thee is my firm resolve—which henceforth I give thee—to serve thee by my actions.

[1] *Foundations*, ch. v.
[2] *Factus obediens usque ad mortem* (Phil. ii 8).
[3] *Concept.*, ch. iv.

Resolution

Let us obey as promptly as if Jesus Christ himself spoke through our superior or confessor. [1]

READING

Obedience practised by St Teresa and her Nuns

"Our holy Mother was extremely obedient to her Superiors and Confessors," declares Mother Isabel of St Dominic; "she fulfilled their orders promptly and readily, pleading neither doubt nor difficulty. She did nothing but what obedience decreed, not only as regards exterior matters, but also regarding the most intimate concerns of her soul." (*Process of Avila.*)

"She felt extremely hurt," said one of her spiritual guides, "when her confessor told her the reason of the orders they gave to her. She begged them not to do so, because she was exceedingly fond of simple, prompt and blind obedience." (Fr. Diego de Yepes, *Life of Mother Teresa of Jesus*, book iii, ch. iii.)

A lady of distinction and piety related that she heard Fr. Baltasar Alvarez, another of the Saint's confessors, give the highest praise to the holiness of the holy Mother. "Do you see Teresa of Jesus," he said, "what she is and what she receives from God? Well, with all that, she takes all I tell her like a child of two. (Fr. Luis de la Puente, *Life of Fr. Baltasar Alvarez*, ch. xi.)

Among many other evidences given by the Saint herself is her statement of her dispositions regarding her superiors and confessors: "Though I certainly believe what passes in my soul comes from God, I would never do anything, for any consideration whatever, that is not judged by him who has the charge of my soul to be for the better service of our Lord." (*Spiritual Relation*, i.)

Concerning the foundation of Seville, which had been

[1] *Maxims.*

imposed on her by her superior, whilst our Lord had told her to go and found elsewhere, she writes: "When I saw that it was the will of my superior, I yielded at once, for our Lord has given me the grace to think that my superiors are always in the right." (*Foundations*, ch. xxiv.)

Fr. Gratian asked her afterwards why she made no objection, since so many theologians gave her the assurance that her revelations came from God, and, after all, his own opinion was only a human one; she replied: "Our faith tells me that an order from you is the expression of the will of God, whilst with regard to all revelations in the world I have not the like assurance." (*Annotation of Fr. Gratian to the Life of St Teresa by Ribera.*)

Our Lord showed more than once to St Teresa that he was pleased with her obedience. "Once," she herself wrote, "when thinking of the great penance practised by Dona Catalina de Cardona,[1] and how I might have done more, considering the desires which our Lord had given me at times, if it had not been for my obedience to my confessors, I asked myself whether it would not be as well if I disobeyed them for the future in this matter. Our Lord said to me: 'No, my daughter, thou art on the sound and safe road. Seest thou all her penance? I think more of thine obedience.'" (*Spiritual Relation*, iii.)

One can see in the book of the *Foundations* how the daughters of St Teresa followed their Mother on the road of obedience. After having recorded some examples, the Saint says: "I am the more delighted with obedience when carried to an extreme, for I have a particular devotion to this virtue; I have therefore done all I could, that all the sisters might have it; nevertheless all my efforts would have been little worth if our Lord had not, in the excess of his compassion, given all of them the grace to feel a special attraction for it." (*Foundations*, ch. xviii.)

[1] Catalina de Cardona left the court of Spain and retired into a desert, where she practised till her death the most severe penance.

FOURTH MEDITATION

CONTEMPT FOR HONOUR

PRELUDE.—O my Lord! my Lord! art thou not our Pattern and our Master?[1] Indeed thou art. And in what did thine honour consist, O ever-honoured Master and King? Didst thou lose it in being humbled even unto death? No, Lord, thou didst thereby gain it and didst win graces for us all.

FIRST POINT

You must believe, Christians, that not all who believe themselves detached are so; it is necessary never to be careless on this point.[2] If anyone detects in himself any tenderness about his good name, and yet wishes to advance in the spiritual life, let him believe me and throw this embarrassment behind his back, for it is a chain which no file can sever; only the help of God, obtained by prayer and much striving on his part, can do it. It seems to me to be a hindrance on the road, and I am astonished at the harm it does.

I see some persons so holy in their works, and they are so great as to fill people with wonder. O my God! why is their soul still on the earth? Why has it not arrived at the summit of perfection? What does it mean? What keeps him back who does so much for God? Oh, there it is!—self-respect! and the worst of it is, merely because Satan now and then convinces them that they are under an obligation to observe it. Well, then, let them believe me: for the love of our Lord, let them give heed to the little ant, who speaks because it is his pleasure. If they take not this caterpillar away, though it does not hurt the whole tree, because some virtues remain, the worm will eat into every one of them. Not only is the tree not beautiful,

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxii. [2] *Life*, ch. xxxi.

but it also never thrives, neither does it suffer the others near it to thrive; for the fruit of good example it bears is not sound, and endures but a short time.

On the contrary, when a soul is inured to the comprehension of that which is truth indeed, everything else seems to it to be but child's play.[1] It laughs to itself, at times, when it sees grave men—men given to prayer, men of religion—make much of points of honour, which it is trampling beneath its feet. They say that discretion, and the dignity of their calling, require it of them as a means to do more good; but that soul knows perfectly well that they would do more good in one day by preferring the love of God to this their dignity, than they will do in ten years by considering it.

Second Point

Ah, Christians! would that we realized what such "honour" means, by which true honour is forfeited![2] I apply it to myself, in the days when I prided myself on my honour, as is the custom in the world, without knowing what the word really meant. Oh! how ashamed I feel at recalling what used to annoy me then, although I was not a person to stand on ceremony. Still, I did not realize where the essential point of honour lay, for I neither knew nor cared for real honour, which is of some use, because it benefits the soul. How truly someone has said: "Honour and profit do not go together." I do not know whether he applied this meaning to it; still, quoting these words as they stand, the soul's profit and what men call honour can never agree. The perversity of the world is most astonishing.

When a soul has been raised to the divine union, it is weary of the days during which it respected points of honour, and the delusion which led it to believe that to be honour which the world calls by that name; now it sees it to be the greatest lie, and that we are all walking therein.[3] It

[1] Ch. xxi.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxvi.
[3] *Life*, ch. xx.

understands that true honour is not delusive, but real, esteeming that which is worthy of esteem, and despising that which is despicable; for everything is nothing, and less than nothing, whatever passeth away, and is not pleasing unto God.

Third Point

Oh, Christian souls! how willing our Lord is to grant us great graces![1] In fact, there is even more urgent need now for persons to prepare for such favours, since there are fewer who care for his honour. We love ourselves too much and are too prudent to give up any of our rights. What a deception! May God in his mercy give us light, lest we sink into such darkness!

And you, religious souls, be on your guard.[2] The devil has not forgotten you; he has invented honours in religious houses; he has settled the laws by which the dwellers rise and fall in dignity (as men do in the world), and they are jealous of their honour in surprisingly petty matters. Learned men must observe a certain order in their studies, which I cannot understand: he who has read theology must not descend to read philosophy. This is a point of honour, which consists in advancing and in not retrograding. If obedience obliged anyone to do the contrary, he would secretly take it as an affront, and would find others to take his part and say that he has been ill-used: the devil would easily find reasons, even from the Holy Scriptures, by which he would appear to prove this. Even among nuns, she who has been Prioress must not afterwards fill any lower office: deference must be shown to the first in rank, and she takes care we do not forget it; at times this even seems a merit, because the Rule enjoins it. The thing is absurd, and enough to make one laugh—or rather weep, and with better cause than can be told. I know the Rule does not forbid me to be humble: the regulation is made to maintain order, but I am not to be so careful of my dignity as to

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIth Mansion, ch. iv.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxvi.

insist on this point being obeyed as strictly as the rest. And perhaps I keep those injunctions very slackly, while I will give up no jot or tittle of this one. Let others see to what concerns my rank, and let me take no notice of it! The fact is, we are bent on rising higher, although we shall never mount to heaven by this path, and we will not dream of descending.

Listen also to this, religious souls. For the love of God, do not wish to be the favourite of your superior. Let each one do her duty, and if the superior is not pleased with her, you may be sure our Lord will repay her and be satisfied with her. We did not come here to be rewarded in this life: let us keep our minds fixed on eternity and take no account of this world's matters, which do not even last our lifetime. Today, another nun is the favourite; tomorrow, if he sees some greater virtue in you, the superior will like you best—if not, it is of little consequence. Never give way to such thoughts, which sometimes rise from some trifling matter and may worry you a great deal. Check them at once by reflecting that your "kingdom is not of this world,"[1] and that everything will come to an end, for there is nothing here that does not change. But this is a poor remedy and an uncertain and imperfect one: it is best that you should be disliked and humbled, and that you should wish to be so, for the sake of that Lord who dwells within you. Turn your thoughts upon yourself and look within: there you will find your Master and your Bridegroom, who will never forsake you. The less consolation you receive from without, the more he will caress you. He is full of compassion, and he never fails those who are afflicted and despised if they trust in him alone.

Colloquy

O my God! If only we really knew thee, all things would be indifferent to us, for thou givest in abundance to all who truly trust in thee.[2] Believe me, Christians, the

[1] *Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo* (Joan. xviii 36). [2] Ch. xxix.

grasp of this truth helps us immensely to see the deception of all worldly favours that prevent the soul from entering into itself. God have mercy on me! Who could make people understand this? Not I, for certain, for, although no one has better reason to say so than myself, yet I never realized it as I should do.

Resolution

Let us try to realize what honour is, and by what it is forfeited.[1]

READING

How St Teresa despised Honour

Let us listen to herself.

"I was much tormented—and even now I am tormented—when I saw people, and when they spake well of me. I have suffered, and still suffer, much in this way. I think at once of the life of Christ and of the Saints, and then my life seems the reverse of theirs, for they received nothing but contempt and ill-treatment. All this makes me afraid; I dare not lift up my head, and I wished nobody could see me. It is not thus with me when I am persecuted; then my soul is so conscious of strength, though the body suffers, and though I am in other ways afflicted, that I do not know how this can be; but so it is—and my soul seems then to be a queen in its kingdom, having everything under its feet." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxi.)

"When the holy Mother left the convent of the Incarnation for the first convent of her Reform, she longed to be a simple lay-sister. She begged this favour earnestly of her superiors, but they assured her that it could not possibly be granted, since she wore the veil of a choir nun." (Declaration of V. Mother Ann of Jesus.) "She endeavoured at least to avoid being a superior. She had been followed to the convent of St Joseph by four religious of the Incarnation. Amongst them she chose Mother Ann of

[1] Ch. xxxvi.

St John as Prioress, and Sister Ann of the Angels as Subprioress. Nevertheless, shortly after, the Bishop of Avila, who was her superior, seeing that she who was the true Mother and foundress ought also to be Prioress, obliged her to discharge that office, though, for her part, she would much more readily have been a subject. However, in order not to fail in obedience, she resigned herself to rule the convent." (*Ribera, book ii, ch. v.*)

"She strove as much as possible not to be called 'Foundress of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns,' and would reprehend the sisters who called her 'Our Mother Foundress,' this title causing her the deepest confusion and mortification. She grieved very much when esteemed as a saint and used to say: 'When, O Lord, will people recognize me for what I am?'" (*Declaration of Mother Ann of the Incarnation.*)

"I observed," said the same religious, "that she took the greatest care to conceal the mercies and favours our Lord granted her; when alluding to these extraordinary effects, she would say that no importance was to be given to such things, but rather to substantial virtues. She rejoiced extremely at being mortified and reprehended by her superiors, or when meeting with an opportunity of bearing some affliction or injury. She told me with the greatest satisfaction that for her no music and harmony were comparable to injuries, disgrace and mortifications; that we had this life only to suffer for God, and the other to enjoy him. I saw her many times in rapture, her face radiant with light, yet she always showed wonderful composure and humility, so that it seemed as if she longed to be under the feet of everyone. This abasement shone in her whole conduct, in a way impossible to express by words. One must have been witness of the fact to realize it." (*Process of Granada.*)

EIGHTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

THE RESURRECTION

PRELUDE.—After I had been to Holy Communion, I beheld our Lord full of splendour, beauty, and majesty as he was after his resurrection, just as he appeared to the Apostles without having entered through the door, when he said: "*Pax vobis.*"[1]

FIRST POINT

Think, Christian souls, of our Lord at his resurrection.[2] How he shone with splendour! How beautiful and majestic, how victorious, how joyful he was! What spoils he brought away from the battle, where he won a glorious kingdom that he wishes to make all your own.

Indeed, if in heaven itself there were nothing else to delight our eyes but the great beauty of glorified bodies, that would be excessive bliss, particularly the vision of the humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord.[3] If here below, where His Majesty shows himself to us according to the measure which our wretchedness can bear, it is so great, what must it be there, where the fruition of it is complete! When I saw him speaking to me, I was contemplating his great beauty and the sweetness with which those words of his came forth from his divine month—they were sometimes uttered with severity. If I were to spend many years devising how to picture to myself anything so beautiful, I should never be able, nor even know how to do it, for it is beyond the reach of any possible imagination here below; the whiteness and brilliancy alone are inconceivable. It is not a brilliancy which dazzles, but a delicate whiteness and an infused brilliancy, furnishing the most excessive

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. ii.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvi. [3] *Life*, ch. xxxix.

delight to the eyes, never wearied thereby, nor by the visible brightness which enables us to see a beauty so divine. It is a light so different from any light here below, that the very brightness of the sun we see, in comparison with the brightness and light before our eyes, seems to be something so obscure that no one would ever wish to open his eyes again.

It is like most pellucid water running in a bed of crystal, reflecting the rays of the sun, compared with most muddy water on a cloudy day, flowing on the surface of the earth. Not that there is anything like the sun present here, nor is the light like that of the sun: this light seems to be natural; and, in comparision with it, every other light is something artificial. It is a light which knows no night; but rather, as it is always light, nothing ever disturbs it.

Second Point

What I see is not a dead man, but the living Christ; and he makes me see that he is God and man—not as he was in the sepulchre, but as he was when he had gone forth from it, risen from the dead.[1] He comes at times in majesty so great, that no one can have any doubt that it is our Lord himself, especially after Communion; we know that he is then present, our faith says so. He shows himself so clearly to be the Lord of that little dwelling-place, that the soul seems to be dissolved and lost in Christ.[2] And whilst we behold the excellence and beauty and glory of the most holy humanity with the eyes of the soul, by another quite spiritual way we learn how he is God, is mighty, can do all things, governs all things, and fills all things with his love.

Here it is plain, O my Jesus! how slight is the power of all the devils in comparison with thine, and how he who is pleasing unto thee is able to tread all hell under his feet. Here we see why the devils trembled when thou didst go down to Limbo, and why they might have longed for a thousand hells still lower, in order to escape from thy terrible majesty. I see that it is thy will the soul should feel the

[1] *Life*, ch. xxviii, xxix. [2] Ch. xxviii.

greatness of thy majesty and the power of thy most sacred humanity, united with thy divinity. Here too we see what the day of judgement will be, when we shall behold the King in his majesty and in the rigour of his justice against the wicked. Here we learn true humility, imprinted in the soul by the sight of its own wretchedness, of which now it cannot be ignorant. Here also is confusion of face and true repentance for sins.

Third Point

Once when I went to Communion I called to mind the exceeding great majesty of him I had seen, and considered that it was he who is present in the most Holy Sacrament—and very often our Lord was pleased to show himself to me in the Host—the very hairs on my head stood, and I thought I should come to nothing.[1]

O thou Treasure of the poor! how marvellously thou sustainest souls, showing to them, not all at once, but by little and little, the abundance of thy riches! When I behold thy great majesty hidden beneath that which is so slight as the Host is, I am filled with wonder, ever since that vision, at thy great wisdom; and I know not how it is that our Lord gives me the strength and courage necessary to draw near to him, were it not that he who has had such compassion on me, and still has, gives me strength, nor would it be possible for me to be silent, or refrain from making known marvels so great.

What must be the thoughts of a wretched person such as I am, full of abomination, and who has spent her life with so little fear of God, when she draws near to our Lord's great Majesty, at the moment he is pleased to show himself to my soul? How can I open my mouth, that has uttered so many words against him, to receive that most glorious Body, purity and compassion itself? The love that is visible on his most beautiful Face, sweet and tender, pains and distresses the soul, because it has not served him, more than all the terrors of His Majesty.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxviii.

Colloquy

O my Jesus, who can describe the majesty wherein thou showest thyself![1] How utterly thou art the Lord of the whole world, and of heaven, and of a thousand other and innumerable worlds and heavens, the creation of which is possible to thee! The soul understands by that majesty wherein thou showest thyself that it is nothing for thee to be Lord of all this.[2] O my Lord! Ah, if thou didst not throw a veil over thy greatness, who could dare, being so foul and miserable, to come in contact with thy great majesty? Blessed be thou, O Lord! May the angels and all creation praise thee, who orderest all things according to the measure of our weakness, so that, when we have the fruition of thy sovereign mercies, thy great power may not terrify us, so that we dare not, being a frail and miserable race, persevere in that fruition!

Resolution

Let us try to do what we can, not clinging to anything upon earth, but having all our thoughts and conversation in heaven.[3]

READING

A Vision of our Lord Glorified related by St Teresa

"What should have been my thoughts, then, on one occasion when I saw what I have described? Truly, O my Lord and my joy, I am going to say that in some way, in this great affliction of my soul, I have done something in thy service. Ah! I know not what I am saying, for I am writing this as if the words were not mine, because I am troubled, and in some measure beside myself, when I call these things to remembrance. If these thoughts were really mine, I might well say that I had done something for thee, O my Lord; but as I can have no good thought

[1] *Life*, ch. xxviii. [2] Ch. xxxviii. [3] *Life*, ch. xi.

if thou givest it not, no thanks are due to me; I am the debtor, O Lord, and it is thou who art the offended One.

"Once, when I was going to Communion, I saw with the eyes of the soul, more distinctly than with those of the body, two devils of most hideous shape; their horns seemed to encompass the throat of the poor priest; and I beheld my Lord, in that great majesty of which I have spoken, held in the hands of that priest, in the Host he was about to give me. It was plain that the hands were those of a sinner, and I felt that the soul of that priest was in mortal sin. What must it be, O my Lord, to look upon thy beauty amid shapes so hideous? The two devils were so frightened and cowed in thy presence, that they seemed as if they would have willingly run away, hadst thou but given them leave. So troubled was I by the vision, that I knew not how I could go to Communion. I was also in great fear, for I thought, if the vision was from God, that His Majesty would not have allowed me to see the evil state of that soul.

"Our Lord himself told me to pray for that priest; that he had allowed this in order that I might understand the power of the words of consecration, and how God failed not to be present, however wicked the priest might be who uttered them, and that I might see his great goodness in that he left himself in the very hands of his enemy, for my good and for the good of all. I understood clearly how the priests are under greater obligations to be holy than other persons; what a horrible thing it is to receive this most Holy Sacrament unworthily, and how great is the devil's dominion over a soul in mortal sin. It did me great service, and made me fully understand what I owe to God. May he be blessed for evermore!" (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxviii.)

SECOND MEDITATION

ZEAL FOR SOULS

PRELUDE.—As I was exceedingly distressed because so many souls were perishing, I was one night in prayer, when our Lord appeared to me in his wonted manner, and showed me great love, as if he wished to comfort me.[1] He then said: "Wait a little, my daughter, and thou shalt see great things."

FIRST POINT

The soul united to God feels an exceedingly great pain at seeing God offended and at thinking how many souls, both heretics and heathens, are lost eternally, and, keenest grief of all, Christians also![2] The soul realizes the greatness of God's mercy and knows that, however wicked men are, they may still repent and be saved; yet it fears that many precipitate themselves into hell.

As for me, I always envied very much those who for the love of our Lord could employ themselves in this work for souls, though they might suffer a thousand deaths.[3] Thus, when I am reading in the lives of the Saints how they converted souls, I have more devotion, more tenderness and envy, than when I read of all the pains of martyrdom they underwent; for this is an attraction which our Lord has given me; and I think he prizes one soul which of his mercy we have gained for him by our prayer and labour more than all the services we may render him. I looked often on myself as on one who, having great treasures in her keeping, wished all to have the benefit of it, but whose hands were restrained from distributing it.

Sometimes I was so distressed, that I could not contain myself. Weeping much, I cried unto our Lord, beseeching him to show me, when the devil was carrying so many souls

[1] *Foundations*, ch. i. [2] *Interior Castle*, Ist Mansion, ch. ii.
[3] *Foundations*, ch. i.

away, how I might do something to gain one or another for his service, and how I might do something by prayer, now that I could do nothing else.[1] Indeed, if I might help by my prayers to make but one soul love him more and praise him, and that only for a short time, I think that of more importance than to dwell in glory.

Second Point

I should live to raise my voice, and publish to all the world how important it is for men not to be satisfied with the common way,[2] and how great the good is that God will give us if we prepare ourselves to receive it.[3] I say again that these desires are such that I am melted away in myself. . . . Above all, I feel in myself a very earnest desire that God may find those who will serve him, particularly learned men, in all detachment, and who will not cleave to anything of this world, for I see it is all a mockery, for when I see the great needs of the Church, I look upon it as a mockery to be distressed about aught else. I do nothing but pray to God for such men, because I see that one person who is wholly perfect in the true fervour of the love of God, will do more good than many who are lukewarm.

Alas! even preachers go about arranging their sermons so as to displease no one.[4] They have a good intention, and their work is good; yet still few amend their lives. But how is it that there are not many who, in consequence of their sermons, abstain from public sins? Well, I think it is because the preachers are highly sensible men. They are not burning with the great fire of the love of God, as the Apostles were, casting worldly prudence aside; and so their fire throws out but little heat. I do not say that their fire ought to burn like that of the Apostles, but I do wish it were stronger than I see it is. Do you know wherein much of this fire consists? In the hatred of this life, in the desertion of its honours, in being utterly indifferent

[1] *Relations*, xi.
[2] *Relations*, i.
[3] *Relations*, ii.
[4] *Life*, ch. xiii.

whether we lose or gain anything or everything, provided the truth be told and maintained for the glory of God; for he who is courageously in earnest for God, looks upon loss or gain indifferently. I do not say that I am a person of this kind, but I wish I were.

Third Point

Those who cannot help their neighbour personally have much power to do so by prayer, if their resolutions are heroic and their wish of saving souls is sincere.[1] Our Lord may even permit them to be of some service to others, either during this life or after death.[2] This is what I would have us strive for—to offer our petitions and to practise prayer, not for our own enjoyment, but to gain strength to serve God. Believe me, both Martha and Mary must entertain our Lord and keep him as their Guest, nor must they be so inhospitable as to offer him no food. How can Mary do this while she sits at his feet, if her sister does not help her? His food is, that in every possible way we should draw souls to him, that they may be saved and may praise him for ever.

You may say that you have neither the power nor the means to lead souls to God: though you would willingly do so you do not know how, as you can neither teach nor preach as did the Apostles. The devil frequently fills our thoughts with great schemes, so that instead of putting our hands to what work we can do to serve our Lord, we may rest satisfied with wishing to perform impossibilities.

You can do much by prayer; and then, do not try to help the whole world, but principally those in whose company you live; this work will be all the better because you are the more bound to it. Do you think it is a trifling matter that your humility and mortification, your readiness to serve your neighbour, your fervent charity towards him and your love for God, should be as a fire to enkindle the zeal of others, and that you should constantly incite them

[1] *Concept.*, ch ii. [2] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iv.

to practise the other virtues? This would be a great work and one most pleasing to our Lord; by thus doing all that is in your power, you would prove to His Majesty your willingness to do still more, and he would reward you as if you had won him many souls.

Colloquy

O God! O God! How is it, Lord? How pitiful! What utter blindness to seek for happiness where it cannot be found.[1] Have pity, Creator, on thy creatures! Remember, we do not understand ourselves or know what we want, nor do we ask aright! Lord, give us light! See, we need it more than did the man born blind, for he longed to see the light but could not, while we do not wish to see it.

Oh, ill past remedy, needing thee to manifest both thy power and thy mercy! O true God of mine! How hard a thing I crave of Thee! No less than that thou shouldst love them who love not thee: shouldst open to those who do not knock; shouldst cure those who wish to ail, and who foster their maladies. Thou didst declare, my Master, that thou camest to seek sinners: these are the real sinners! Have mercy on those so merciless to themselves, whose miserable condition prevents their wishing to draw near to thee: do thou come to them, O my God! I ask this in their name: I know that when they are enlightened and have returned to their senses, having begun to taste thy sweetness, they will rise from the death of sin.

Resolution

Accommodate yourself to everyone's humour: be cheerful with the happy, grave with the sad—in short, be all to all, that you may win all.[2]

[1] *Exclamations*, viii

[2] *Maxims.*

READING

St Teresa instigated by Zeal to found St Joseph's Carmel at Avila

"I did not at first intend," St Teresa wrote, "that such rigorous bodily austerities should be practised in St Joseph's of Avila, nor that it should possess no income; on the contrary, I wished it to have sufficient means to prevent the possibility of want; which shows how weak and wicked I am, although I meant rather to do what was right than to seek for self-indulgence.

"Just at this time I heard of the miseries France was suffering, of the havoc the Lutherans were making there, and how this wretched sect was increasing. It grieved me bitterly, and as if I could have done anything, or had been of any consequence, I cried to God and begged him to cure this terrible evil. I felt that I would have laid down a thousand lives to save one of the many souls perishing there. Yet as I am but a woman, feeble and faulty, it was impossible for me to serve God in the way I wished. Indeed, all I cared for then, as I do now, was that, as the enemies of God are so many and his friends so few, these latter at least might be good. Therefore I determined to do what little was in my power, which was to follow the Evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could, and to see that the few nuns here should do the same. Trusting in the great mercy of God, which never fails those who resolve to leave all things for his sake, I hoped that as my sisters here are all that I ever wished them to be, their virtues should be strong enough to resist the influence of my defects, and that I might be able to bring some comfort to our Lord. Thus, being all of us employed in interceding for the champions of the Church, and the preachers and the theologians who defend her, we might, to our utmost, aid this Lord of mine.

"The wretched men infected by this plague-spot are already the slaves of the devil. They have earned a bitter scourging from the hands of the fiend and have bought eternal fire with the pleasures he has given them. That must be their fate, though it breaks my heart to see so

many souls lose themselves. Would that the devil's power there were not so great: fain would I not see more and more ruined every day.

"O my sisters in Christ! help me to pray to our Lord for this! This is why we live here together, why the Lord has brought you here; it must be your work, the object of your longings; your tears and prayers must beg for this, and not for any worldly matters. I laugh, and yet I grieve, at the intentions recommended to our prayers—even such matters as to ask His Majesty for success in business matters and lawsuits concerning money, and this from people who I wish would beg God for grace to trample such things under foot. These people mean well; therefore to tell the truth, I pray for them to God, because of their piety in asking for it, although, for my part, I believe that he never listens to such prayers from me.

"The world is in a fever; men wish, as it were, to condemn Christ again, for they suborn a thousand false witnesses against him: they want to level the Church with the ground; and shall we waste our time in petitioning for that which, were it granted, might cost some soul its entrance into heaven? No, sisters, this is no time to ask God for what is of little moment. Were there no need to humour the weakness of human nature, which seeks for help everywhere (and, indeed, it would be well if we could help it in any way), I should wish it to be known that these are not the matters for which God is so fervently entreated within the convent of St Joseph." (*Way of Perfection,* ch. i..)

THIRD MEDITATION

HOLY COMMUNION

PRELUDE.—Sometimes I have such a vehement longing for Communion; I do not think it can be expressed.[1] One morning it rained so much as to make it seem impossible to leave the house. When I had gone out, I was so beside myself with that longing, that if spears had been pointed at my heart, I should have rushed upon them; the rain was nothing.

FIRST POINT

Our Lord had given to a person I am acquainted with[2] so lively a faith and devotion,[3] that when she heard people saying that they wished they had lived while Christ, our only Good, dwelt in the world, she used to smile to herself, thinking that while he so undoubtedly remains among us in the Blessed Sacrament, we have nothing left to desire. Although she was far from perfect, yet for many years my friend endeavoured so to strengthen her faith, that whenever she received Holy Communion, at which time, as she believed, our Lord entered her poor little dwelling, she might, as far as possible, withdraw her mind from all earthly things and enter into herself with him. She strove to control her senses in order that they might comprehend the grace she was enjoying, or, rather, that they might not prevent her soul from enjoying it. She imagined herself at the feet of our Lord and wept with Magdalen, as if she had really seen him in the house of the Pharisee. Even when she felt no devotion, faith told her that it was well for her to be there, and she continued conversing with him. For, unless we choose to be obtuse and to blind ourselves to the fact, we cannot suppose that Christ's presence here is only an image

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxix. [2] The Saint herself.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiv.

of our imagination, as when we think of him on the Cross or in other phases of his Passion.

That happened in the past, but he is here with us at the present moment in very truth; we need not go far to seek him, for we know that our good Jesus remains with us until the accidents of bread have been consumed by our natural heat. Let us not lose this golden opportunity, but let us stay in his company. If, while Jesus lived in the world, the mere touch of his garments healed the sick, who can doubt that, when he is dwelling in the very centre of our being, he will work miracles for us if we have a living faith in him? And will he not grant our petitions while he is our Guest? His Majesty is not a bad paymaster for a good inn.

Second Point

Take pleasure in remaining in his society, Christians; do not lose this most precious time, for this hour is of the utmost value to the soul, and the good Jesus desires you to spend it with him; take great care not to waste it. If obedience calls you, try to leave your soul with our Lord, who is your Master. But if you allow your thoughts to wander at once to other matters, and you show no more care or reverence for him who dwells within you than if you had not received Holy Communion, how can he make himself known to you? This is the time for our Master to instruct, and for us to listen. Kiss his feet for having taught you, and beseech him not to leave you. . . .

When you have received him, since he really dwells within you, try to shut the eyes of your body and to open those of your soul, If you do this whenever you go to Holy Communion, and if you strive to keep your conscience clear, so that you may frequently enjoy this grace, his coming will not be so hidden but that, in many a way, he will reveal himself to you in proportion to the desire you have of seeing him. Indeed, if your longing for him is very vehement, he may disclose himself entirely to you. But if we care nothing for him whom we have received in such intimate union, but either go to seek him elsewhere or busy ourselves about other and lower matters, what would we

have him do? Must he drag us by force to look at him, and to stay with him because he wishes to manifest himself to us? No! for men did not treat him too well when he showed himself visibly among them and told them who he was—few indeed of them believed him.

He has done us a great grace in teaching us that he is present in the Blessed Sacrament. But he will not show himself openly or reveal his glories or bestow his treasures, save on souls which prove that they ardently desire him, for these are his real friends.

Third Point

When you hear Mass, but do not go to Holy Communion, you may make an act of spiritual Communion, which is exceedingly profitable. Recollect yourselves in the same manner: this impresses a deep love for our Lord on our minds, for if we prepare our souls to receive him, he never fails, in many ways unknown to us, to give us his grace. It is as if we approach a large fire—if we kept at a distance from it and covered our hands, we should hardly feel its heat, although we should be warmer than without it. But if we approach this fire (which is our Lord) with the intention of expelling the cold, the case is quite different, for if the soul is thus well disposed and perseveres for some time, it retains the warmth for several hours, and any small spark which flew out would at once ignite it.

Do not be disturbed if you cannot succeed at first: perhaps the devil may be filling your heart with repugnance and trouble, because he sees what loss he would suffer by your acquiring this habit. Though he may try to make you believe that you could practise greater devotion in other ways, do not be dissuaded from this: our Lord thus tests your love for him. Remember there are few souls that keep beside him or follow him in his trials. Let us suffer something for him—he will repay us. Only think! there are people who not only do not like to be with him, but who drive him from their houses with rudeness and insults; therefore we ought to endure some discomfort in order to show that we wish to see him.

Although, in many places, men leave him by himself, or treat him badly, yet he endures all this and will continue to endure it for the sake of finding but one single soul that will receive him with affection and bear him loving company. Let this soul be yours, for if none were to be found, the Eternal Father would justly refuse to allow him to remain with us. Yet he loves Christ's friends so well, and is so kind a Master, that, knowing it is the will of his holy Son, he will not dissuade him from this praiseworthy deed in which he so generously proves his love for his Father, by finding this wonderful way of testifying his affection for us and of aiding us to bear our trials.

Colloquy

O my God! what father could be found who, having given us his son, and such a son, would, after we had so ill-used him, have allowed him to remain among us to endure fresh wrongs?[1] No such father could be found, save thy Father, O Lord! Ah! what excess of love in both the Father and the Son! O Eternal Father! how can a heart so loving as thine own endure that what was instituted with such ardent love by thy Son, for the sake of pleasing thee (for thou didst bid him love us), should be held of so little value as is the Blessed Sacrament in these days? It is not as if he had left undone aught that could please thee. No, he has consummated everything!

Behold, thy Son remains on earth with us; in deference to him, stop these foul and abominable outrages, for one so pure and beautiful as he is ought not to dwell amid such pollution.[2] We do not ask this for ourselves, O God—we do not deserve it; grant it for the sake of thy Son! We dare not beg that he should stay with us no longer. Without his presence, what would become of us? Everything would go to rack and ruin, for if aught can propitiate thee it is this hostage which we hold. As some redress must be found for these wrongs, may it please thee to supply it, for thou canst do so if thou wilt.

[1] *Way of Perfection*, xxxiii. [2] Ch. xxxv.

O my God! would that my fervent importunity and the signal services rendered thee gave me the right to beg of thee so great a favour in return, for never dost thou leave a just claim unrewarded. But I have done nothing of the kind. Indeed, perchance it is I who have provoked thee and brought about these evils in punishment for my sins. What, then, can I do, O my Creator, but offer thee this most holy Bread, thus rendering thee back thine own gift, beseeching thee by the merits of thy Son, to grant this boon which, in so many ways, he has earned from thee?

Resolution

Let us remember that undoubtedly we should be enriched if we approached the most Holy Sacrament but once with great faith and love.[1]

READING

St Teresa and the Eucharist

While living in the convent of the Incarnation, before starting to found her monasteries, St Teresa, according to the advice of prudent confessors, began to communicate every day. From this time the fits of vomiting, which until then attacked her every morning, disappeared, although she continued to suffer from them in the evening the rest of her life. Daily communion was rare at this epoch, even among nuns, but her example so influenced the sisters of the Incarnation, that henceforth many received the Holy Eucharist frequently.

The presence of our Lord worked surprising effects in the holy Mother Teresa. When she received the Blessed Sacrament her appearence was so majestic that people could not doubt that God himself dwelt within her soul, and she felt herself liquefied by the intensity of her love and delight.

When she was a prey to temptation or anguish, as a rule, after having communicated or even having merely approached

[1] *Concept.*, ch. iii

the Holy Eucharist, all trouble vanished from her soul. Her communions often cured acute bodily pains, and she suddenly felt healthy and strong.

She frequently beheld in the consecrated Host her Divine Master, glorified as he was after his resurrection. Very often she fell in ecstasy as soon as she received the Blessed Sacrament and could not be recalled to her senses. Once, our Lord, appearing to her as she communicated, bade her with all her strength to secure the establishment of a convent of strict observance, assuring her that he would there be served and loved: this locution gave birth to the reform of the Order of Carmel.

Teresa's soul was consumed by such a desire of receiving our Lord that nothing could possibly frighten or discourage her in her efforts to obtain it. However, when she understood that such was the will of her Master, she offered its deprivation up to him, readily and cheerfully. (*Ribera,* part iv, ch. xii.)

On Palm Sunday she always received Communion with great fervour, to make reparation for the hard-heartedness of the Jews, who on that day let our Lord return to Bethany for his supper. She relates how he vouchsafed to reward her simple love.

"On Palm Sunday, at Communion, I was in a deep trance—so much so, that I was not able even to swallow the Host; and still having it in my mouth, when I had come a little to myself, I verily believed that my mouth was filled with blood; and my face and my whole body seemed to be covered with it, as if our Lord had been shedding it at that moment. I thought it was warm, and the sweetness I then felt was exceedingly great; and our Lord said to me: 'Daughter, my will is that my Blood should profit thee; and be not afraid that my compassion will fail thee. I shed it in much suffering, and, as thou seest, thou hast the fruition of it in great joy. I reward thee well for the pleasure thou gavest me today.' He said this because I have been in the habit of going to Communion, if possible, on this day for more than thirty years, and of labouring to prepare my soul to be the house of our Lord; for I considered the cruelty of the Jews to be very great, after giving him so grand a reception,

in letting him go so far for supper; and I used to picture him as remaining with me, and truly in a poor lodging, as I see now. And thus I used to have such foolish thoughts; they must have been acceptable to our Lord, for this was one of the visions which I regard as most certain; and accordingly, it has been a great blessing to me in the matter of Communion." (*Relations*, iv.)

To erect one sanctuary more in which the Holy Eucharist would repose rejoiced Teresa exceedingly, and this thought comforted her in the labours of the foundations. She wrote: "Though I felt a great dislike to journeys, especially long ones, when I had once started, I thought nothing of them, looking to him for whose service they were undertaken; and calling to mind that our Lord would be praised, and the most Holy Sacrament would dwell in the house I was going to found. It is a special joy to me to see one church more, when I consider how many the Lutherans are destroying. I know of no trouble, however great it may be, that should be dreaded, when it is the condition of obtaining so great a good for Christendom; and it should be a great consolation to us—though many among us do not think of it—that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, dwells as he does in so many places in the most Holy Sacrament." (*Foundations*, ch. xviii.)

Her devotion to the Holy Eucharist produced in her a deep and cordial reverence towards the priests who consecrated it. According to the custom of Spain, she used to kneel before them and kiss their hand, asking for a blessing. In one of her voyages, she stopped at Malagon and alighted on the public square, in front of the convent. She met there with the chaplain of the Community. Though he was not old and many people had gathered on the spot, she knelt down craving for a blessing. All that concerned the Blessed Sacrament, as altar, ornaments, linen and sacred vessels, she ordered to be kept in perfect order.

When she was with ladies of high rank, who offered her some presents, she willingly accepted perfumes for the Blessed Sacrament, and even asked for the best that could be found. (*Ribera*, book iv, ch. xii.)

FOURTH MEDITATION

HEAVEN

PRELUDE.—Among the many other joys, the principal happiness of heaven appears to me to consist in a disregard of all earthly things, and in a peace and glory that dwell in a soul which rejoices in the bliss of its companions.[1] It lives in perfect peace and feels supreme satisfaction in seeing that all those around it honour and praise God and bless his name, and in knowing that they never offend him. In heaven, everyone loves him; the soul cares for nothing but loving him; it cannot cease to do so, because it knows him as he is. Who can behold but a part of that glory which our Lord will give to those who serve him without confessing that all he may do, and all he may suffer, are altogether as nothing, when we may hope for such a reward?[2]

FIRST POINT

One night I was so unwell that I thought I might be excused from making my prayer; so I took my rosary, that I might employ myself in vocal prayer, trying not to be recollected in my understanding, though outwardly I was recollected, being in my oratory.[3] These little precautions are of no use when our Lord will have it otherwise. I remained but a few moments thus, when I was rapt in spirit with such violence that I could make no resistance whatever. It seemed to me that I was taken up to heaven. The time was no longer than that in which the *Ave Maria* might be said, but I was amazed at what I saw.

It happened also as time went on, and it happens now from time to time, that our Lord showed me still greater secrets. The soul, even if it would, has neither the means nor the power to see more than what he shows it; and so,

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxx.
[2] *Life*, ch. xxvi.
[3] Ch. xxxviii.

each time, I saw nothing more than what our Lord was pleased to let me see. But such was the vision, that the least part of it was enough to make my soul amazed, and to raise it so high that it esteems and counts as nothing all the things of this life. I wish I could describe, in some measure, the smallest portion of what I saw; but when I think of doing it, I find it impossible; for the mere difference between the light we have here below, and that which is seen in a vision—both being light—is so great, that there is no comparison between them; the brightness of the sun itself seems to be something exceedingly loathsome. In a word, the imagination, however strong it may be, can neither conceive nor picture to itself this light, nor any one of the things which our Lord showed me in a joy so supreme that it cannot be described; for then all the senses exult so deeply and so sweetly, that no description is possible.

Second Point

Since our Lord has made me understand how great a difference there is in heaven between the fruition of one and that of another, I wish that I observed no measure in serving His Majesty, and in using my whole life and strength and health therein; and I would not have any fault of mine rob me of the slightest degree of fruition.[1]

And so I say that if I were asked which I preferred, to endure all the trials of the world until the end of it, and then receive one slight degree of additional glory or without suffering of any kind to enter into glory of a slightly lower degree, I would accept—oh, how willingly!—all those trials for one slight degree of fruition in the contemplation of the greatness of God; for I know that he who understands him best, loves him and praises him best. I do not mean that I should not be satisfied, and consider myself most blessed, to be in heaven, even if I should be in the lowest place; for as I am one who had a low place in hell, it would be a great mercy of our Lord to admit me at all; and may it please His Majesty to bring me thither, and take away his

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxvii.

eyes from beholding my grievous sins. What I mean is this, if it were in my power, even if it cost me everything, and our Lord gave me the grace to endure much affliction, I would not through any fault of mine lose one degree of glory. Ah, wretched as I am, who by so many faults had forfeited all!

These favours are a great help to recognize our true home, and to see that we are pilgrims here; it is a great thing to see what is going on there, and to know where we havs to live; for if a person has to go and settle in another country, it is a great help to him, in undergoing the fatigues of his journey, that he has discovered it to be a country where he may live in the most perfect peace. Moreover, it makes it easy for us to think of the things of heaven, and to have our conversation there. It is a great gain, because the mere looking up to heaven makes the soul recollected; for as our Lord has been pleased to reveal heaven to me in some degree, my soul dwells upon it in thought; and it happens occasionally that they who are about me, and with whom I find consolation, are those whom I know to be living in heaven, and that I look upon them only as really alive; while those who are on earth are so dead, that the whole world seems unable to furnish me with companions, particularly when these impetuosities of love are upon me. Everything seems a dream, and what I see with the bodily eyes an illusion. What I have seen with the eyes of the soul is that which my soul desires; and as it finds itself far from those things, this is death.

Third Point

My Lord and my God! deliver me from all evil and vouchsafe to take me where all good things are to be found.[1] What do souls look for here, after thou hast shown them in some degree the nothingness of this world, and they have a lively faith in what the Eternal Father is keeping in store for us because his Son asked him to bestow it on us and has bidden us beg it for ourselves? Souls which receive dlvine favours may well desire to be where they will no longer taste

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xlii.

of them by sips. Now that they know something of the grandeurs of God, they long to see them in entirety: they do not wish to dwell amid so many obstacles to their enjoyment of this supreme good, but pine to be where the Sun of Righteousness never sets. All earthly things henceforth seem dim to them. I cannot understand how they can live another hour!

But woe is me, Lord! during this mortal life we live in constant danger of losing the life that is eternal.[1] O life, enemy of my joy, would that it were lawful to put an end to thee! I endure thee, since God endures thee: I sustain thee, for thou art his; do not betray nor harm me in return. And yet, Lord, "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged."[2] All time is short in exchange for thine eternity, yet how long a day, or even an hour appears, laden with the risk and dread of offending thee! Free will, enslaved by thy liberty, unless established in the fear and love of thy Creator! When will that blessed day arrive in which, being freed from all misery, thou wilt be united to the life of thy God?

God is happy, for he knows, loves and rejoices in himself without the possibility of doing otherwise. He is not, nor can he be, at liberty to forget or cease to love himself, nor would such a power be a perfection in him. Thou wilt enter into thy rest, my soul, when thou dost enter into closest intimacy with this sovereign Good, when thou knowest what he knows, lovest what he loves, enjoying what rejoices him. Then thou wilt lose the fickleness of thy will; then, ah then! wilt thou change no more, for the grace of God will have been powerful enough to render thee so perfect a "partaker of his divine nature," that thou wilt no longer have the power nor wish to forget the supreme Good, nor to cease to exult in him and in his love. Blessed are those whose names are written in the Book of Life. But, my soul, if thou art among their number, "Why art thou sad and why dost thou trouble me?"[3]

[1] *Exclamations*, xvi.
[2] *Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est!* (Ps. cxix 5).
[3] *Quare tristis es anima mea et quare conturbas me?* (Ps. xlii 6).

Colloquy

O ye souls, free from all dread of losing your bliss, you who are constantly absorbed in the praises of my God, how blessed is your lot![1] How just it is that you should ceaselessly adore him! How I envy you, who are delivered from the grief I feel in witnessing the hateful offences committed against my God in these unhappy days and the gross ingratitude of men's indifference to the multitude of souls Satan is dragging down to hell. O blessed souls dwelling in paradise! Relieve our miseries and intercede for us with the Divine Mercy, that he may give us some little share of your felicity, and of the certain knowledge you possess. Grant us to understand, my God, what reward thou givest to those who fight valiantly during the nightmare of this wretched life. O souls inflamed with love, obtain for us grace to comprehend your delight at reflecting on the eternity of your bliss and your rapture at knowing it will never end!

Oh, blessed souls, so wise in knowing how to make good use of this loan, who bought with it the matchless prize of so joyful and eternal an inheritance, teach us how you gained through him such endless bliss! Help us, you who are so near the fountain-head, draw water for us who perish with thirst in this world.

Resolution

Think of the heavenly banquet and its food, which is God himself, and of the guests, who are the angels; raise your mind to that feast and long to be there.[2]

READING

A Vision of Heaven related by St Teresa

"Sometimes I have such a vehement longing for Communion: I do not think it can be expressed. One morning

[1] *Exclamations*, xii.

[2] *Maxims*.

it happened to rain so much as to make it seem impossible to leave the house. When I had gone out, I was so beside myself with that longing, that if spears had been pointed at my heart, I should have rushed upon them; the rain was nothing. When I entered the church I fell into a deep trance, and saw heaven open—not a door only, as I used to see at other times. I beheld the throne which, as I have told you, my Father, I saw at other times, with another throne above it, whereupon, though I saw not, I understood by a certain inexplicable knowledge that the Godhead dwelt.

"The throne seemed to me to be supported by certain animals; I believe I saw the form of them: I thought they might be the form of Evangelists. But now the throne was arrayed, and him who sat on it I did not see, but only an exceedingly great multitude of angels, who seemed to me more beautiful, beyond all comparison, than those I had seen in heaven. I thought they were perhaps the seraphim or cherubim, for they were very different in their glory, and seemingly all on fire. The difference is great, as I said before; and the joy I then felt cannot be described, either in writing or by word of mouth; it is inconceivable to anyone who has not experienced it. I felt that everything that man can desire was all there together, and I saw nothing; one told me, but I know not who, that all I could do there was to understand that I could understand nothing, and see how everything was nothing in comparison with that. So it was; my soul was afterwards vexed to see that it could rest on any created thing: how much more, then, if it had any affection thereto; for everything seemed to me but an ant-hill. I communicated, and remained during Mass. I know not how it was: I thought I had been but a few minutes, and I was amazed when the clock struck; I had been two hours in that trance and joy." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxix.)

NINTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

LOVE OF GOD

PRELUDE.—Our Lord showed me what an exceedingly great blessing it is to be tried and persecuted for his sake;[1] for the growth of the love of God in my soul, which I now discerned, was such as to fill me with wonder. The love of God, together with the longing that all men may serve him, that is all I find in myself.[2]

FIRST POINT

Perfection does not consist in consolation, but in greater love; our reward will be in proportion to this, and to the justice and sincerity of our actions.[3]

The soul that truly loves God loves all good, seeks all good, protects all good, praises all good, joins itself to good men, helps and defends them, and embraces all the virtues: it only loves what is true and worth loving.[4] Do you think it possible that anyone who loves God, cares, or can care, for vanities, or riches, or worldly things, or pleasures and honours? Neither can such a soul quarrel nor feel envy, for it aims at nothing save pleasing its Beloved. It dies with longing for his love and gives its life in striving how to please him better. A love for God may be great or small; and it shows itself according to its strength. If it is weak, it is little seen, and if it is strong, it appears more clearly; but small or great, love for God can never be concealed.

When souls love fervently, this is plainly shown in many ways, for a large fire throws a bright and clear flame. Could a love so strong, so just, ever growing while it lives, which

[1] *Life*, ch. xxviii.
[2] *Spiritual Relation*, xi.
[3] *Interior Castle*, IIIrd Mansion, ch. ii.
[4] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xl.

never discovers any cause why it should cease, but finds so many reasons for its being as does the love of God, built as it is on the firm foundation of a love which is returned—can such a love as this be hidden? And that it is returned we cannot doubt, for the bitter sorrows, the trials and blood-shedding which cost our Lord his life, were known to men, and prove his love beyond all question.

The genuine love of God, that is powerful and freed from earthly dross, rises above mortal things and is sovereign over all the elements of this world. What wonder that the Saints, with the help of God, did what they pleased with them? Fire and water obeyed St. Martin, the birds and fish were subject to St Francis, and many other Saints possessed this power over created things which they had evidently gained by striving to despise the world and by subjecting themselves to the Lord of creation. Although a tempest rose against it, fervent charity would not be destroyed, but would vanquish its enemy.

Second Point

If you were to ask how is this love to be had, my answer is: by a good resolution to do and suffer for God, and by carrying that resolution into act whenever the opportunity occurs.[1] This love must not be the fabric of our imagination; we must prove it by our words.[2]

The persons ill of this disease of divine love are resolved to risk a thousand lives for God, and long for an opportunity of losing them.[3] They are like soldiers who, to acquire booty, and therewith enrich themselves, wish for war, knowing well that they cannot become rich without it.[4] They wish to prove to God that they do not serve him for pay; so such people do not urge themselves to work harder for him by the thought of the glory they will gain, but rather labour to satisfy their love, of which the nature is to toil for the Beloved in a thousand ways. Such souls would fain find

[1] *Foundations*, ch. v.
[2] *Interior Castle*, ivth Mansion, ch. i.
[3] *Life*, ch. xxxiv.
[4] *Interior Castle*, vith Mansion, ch. ix.

a way to consume themselves in him, and were there need that, for the sake of God's greater glory, they should be annihilated for ever, they would count it a great gain. Besides, our Lord does not care so much for the importance of our works as for the love with which they are done. When we do all we can, His Majesty will enable us to do more every day. If we do not grow weary, but give our Lord every sacrifice we can, both interior and exterior, His Majesty will unite them with that he offered to his Father for us on the Cross, that they may be worth the value given them by our love, however mean the works themselves may be. Love alone gives value to our actions: "the one thing necessary" is to possess a love so strong that it cannot cease loving.

Third Point

O Lord of my soul, and my God! how is it that when a soul is determined to love thee—doing all it can, by forsaking all things, in order that it may the better occupy itself with the love of God—it is not thy will it should have the joy of ascending at once to the possession of perfect love? [1] I have spoken amiss; I ought to have said, and my complaint should have been, Why is it we do not? For the fault is wholly our own that we do not rejoice at once in a dignity so great, seeing that the attaining to the perfect possession of this true love brings all blessings with it.

We think so much of ourselves and are so dilatory in giving ourselves wholly to God, that, as His Majesty will not let us have the fruition of that which is so precious but at a great cost, so neither do we perfectly prepare ourselves for it. I see plainly that there is nothing by which so great a good can be procured in this world. If, however, we did what we could, not clinging to anything upon earth, but having all our thoughts and conversation in heaven, I believe that this blessing would quickly be given us, provided we perfectly prepared ourselves for it at once, as some of the Saints have done. We think we are giving all to God, but, in fact, we are offering only the revenue or the produce, while we retain the fee-simple of the land in our own possession.

[1] *Life*, ch. xi.

We resolve to become poor, and it is a resolution of great merit; but we very often take great care not to be in want, not simply of what is necessary, but of what is superfluous: yea, and to make for ourselves friends who may supply us; and in this way we take more pains, and perhaps expose ourselves to greater danger in order that we may want nothing, than we did formerly, when we had our own possessions in our power.

We thought, also, that we gave up all desire of honour when we became religious, or when we began the spiritual life and followed after perfection; and yet, when we are touched on the point of honour, we do not then remember that we had given it up to God. We would seize it again, and take it, as they say, out of his hands, even after we had made him, to all appearance, the Lord of our own will. So it is in everything else.

A pleasant way this of seeking the love of God! We retain our own affections, and yet will have that love, as they say, by handfuls. We make no efforts to bring our desires to good effect, or to raise them resolutely above the earth. This is not well, and we are seeking things that are incompatible one with the other. So, because we do not give ourselves up wholly and at once, this treasure is not given wholly and at once to us. May it be the good pleasure of our Lord to give it us drop by drop, though it may cost us all the trials in the world.

I will now relate what happened to me.[1] I was with a religious once in the parlour, when in my soul and spirit I felt what great love burned within him. My interview with him left a new fire in my soul, burning with desire to serve our Lord as in the beginning. O my Jesus! what is a soul on fire with thy love! How we ought to prize it, and implore our Lord to let it live long upon earth! He who has this love should follow after such souls, if it be possible. It is a great thing for a person ill of this disease to find another struck down by it—it comforts him much to see that he is not alone; they help one another greatly to suffer and to merit. They are strong with a double strength.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxiv.

Colloquy

Is it possible, my God my Creator, that there are souls who love thee not? Unhappy creature that I am! It is I who have lived so long without loving thee! Oh, powerful love of God! Nothing seems impossible to one who loves.[1] Happy the soul that has won this peace from its God! It holds sway over all the trials and dangers of the world, and fears nothing when there is a question of rendering any service to its faithful Spouse and Lord O Lord of mercy, my only Good! What more do I seek in this life than a union so close that there can be nothing to divide me from thee?[2] With such a Companion, what can be hard? With thee by my side, what dare I not attempt for thy sake?

Resolution

Accustom yourself to make frequent acts of love, which inflame and melt the soul.[3]

READING

St Teresa's Heart transpierced by the Dart of Divine Love

"The growth in me of the love of God was so strong, that I knew not who could have infused it; for it was most supernatural, and I had not attained to it by any efforts of my own. I saw myself dying with a desire to see God, and I knew not how to seek that life otherwise than by dying. Certain great impetuosities of love, though not so intolerable as those of which I have spoken before, nor yet of so great worth, overwhelmed me. I knew not what to do; for nothing gave me pleasure, and I had no control over myself. It seemed as if my soul were really torn away from myself. Oh, supreme artifice of our Lord, how tenderly didst thou deal with thy miserable slave! Thou didst hide thyself from me, and didst yet constrain me with thy love, with a death so sweet, that my soul would never wish it over.

[1] *Concept.*, ch. iii. [2] Ch. iv. [3] *Maxims.*

"It is not possible for anyone to understand these impetuosities if he has not experienced them himself. It is by no effort of the soul that it sorrows over the wound which the absence of our Lord has inflicted on it; it is far otherwise; for an arrow is driven into the entrails to the quick, and into the heart at times, so that the soul knows not what is the matter with it, nor for what it wishes, It understands clearly enough that it wishes for God, and that the arrow seems tempered with some herb which makes the soul hate itself for the love of our Lord, and willingly lose its life for him. It is impossible to describe or explain the way in which God wounds the soul, nor the very grievous pain inflicted, which deprives it of all self-consciousness; yet this pain is so sweet that there is no joy in the world which gives greater delight. As I have just said, the soul would wish to be always dying of this wound.

"This pain and bliss together carried me out of myself, and I never could understand how it was. Oh, what a sight a wounded soul is!—a soul, I mean, so conscious of it as to be able to say of itself that it is wounded for so good a cause; and seeing distinctly that it never did anything whereby this love should come to it, and it does come from that exceeding love which our Lord bears it. A spark seems to have fallen suddenly upon it, that has set it all on fire. Oh, how often do I remember, when in this state, those words of David: *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum!* They seem to me to be literally true of myself.

"When these impetuosities are not very violent, they seem to admit of a little mitigation—at least, the soul seeks some relief, because it knows not what to do—through certain penances, the painfulness of which, and even the shedding of its blood, are no more felt than if the body were dead. The soul seeks for ways and means to do something that may be felt, for the love of God; but the first pain is so great, that no bodily torture I know of can take it away. As relief is not to be had here, these medicines are too mean for so high a disease. Some slight mitigation may be had, and the pain may pass away a little, by praying God to relieve its sufferings: but the soul sees no relief except in death, by which it thinks to attain completely the fruition

of its good. At other times, these impetuosities are so violent that the soul can do neither this nor anything else; the whole body is contracted, and neither hand nor foot can be moved: if the body be upright at the time, it falls down, as a thing that has no control over itself. It cannot even breathe; all it does is to moan—not loudly, because it cannot: its moaning, however, comes from a keen sense of pain.

"Our Lord was pleased that I should have at times a vision of this kind: I saw an angel close by me, on my left side, in bodily form. This I am not accustomed to see, unless very rarely. Though I have visions of angels frequently, yet I see them only by an intellectual vision such as I have spoken of before. It was our Lord's will that in this vision I should see the angel in this wise. He was not large, but small of stature, and most beautiful—his face burning, as if he were one of the highest angels, who seem to be all of fire; they must be those whom we call cherubim. Their names they never tell me; but I see very well that there is in heaven so great a difference between one angel and another, and between these and the others, that I cannot explain it.

"I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual, though the body has its share in it, even a large one. It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of his goodness to make him experience it who may think I am lying.

"During the days that this lasted, I went about as if beside myself. I wished to see, or speak with no one, but only to cherish my pain, which was to me a greater bliss than all created things could give me." *(Life written by herself,* ch. xxix.)

The heart of St Teresa is exhibited, at the Carmelite convent of Alba, in a crystal globe mounted in a magnificent reliquary of massive silver. The lateral opening made by the seraph can be seen: it penetrates the ventricles. "This wound," says the Surgeon Manuel Sanchez, "was made with great skill and a very fine, sharp instrument. Around the opening of the wound are to be seen traces of fire and combustion." The Saint related that she had several times received this celestial favour, and physicians, aided by this surgeon, have discovered both in the front and back of the heart other small circular openings for whose origin they could not account: these were visible to all. The crystal globe containing the Saint's heart has burst open several times, as though from latent heat within it, and still exhales a very sweet perfume.

The feast of the Transverberation of St Teresa's Heart is celebrated as a double of the second class in the Order of Carmel, and in parts of Spain. (See *Popular Life of St Teresa,* translated from the French by Annie Porter, 1883, ch. ii., *Wonders of St Teresa's Heart.)*

SECOND MEDITATION

GENEROUS DESIRES

PRELUDE.—Confident that His Majesty helps those who are resolved to advance his service and glory, she[1] thinks no more of herself and of her own progress, in comparison with that, than if she did not exist.[2] Sometime there came upon me certain desires to serve God, with a vehemence so great that I cannot describe it. It seems to me then that there is nothing in the world, neither death, nor martyrdom, that I could not easily endure. I know not whence comes such great courage.

FIRST POINT

Blessed, O my God, are they who serve thee by great deeds![3] If envying them, and desiring to do what they do, were of any help to me, I should not be so far behind them as I am in pleasing thee. It is a great help to have high aspirations: by their means we may cause our actions to become great also.[4]

Satan makes us think it is pride to have great desires, to wish to imitate the Saints and to long for martyrdom. He tells us forthwith, or he makes us think, that the actions of the Saints are to be admired, not to be imitated, by us who are sinners. I, too, say the same thing; but we must see which these actions are we have to admire, and which we have to imitate; for it would be wrong in a person who is weak and sickly to undertake much fasting and sharp penances, to retire into the desert, where he could not sleep nor find anything to eat; or, indeed, to undertake any austerities of that kind.

But we ought to think that we can force ourselves, by the grace of God, to hold the world in profound contempt, to

[1] The Saint speaks of herself in a relation addressed to an Inquisitor.
[2] *Relations*, vi. [3] *Life*, ch. xxix.
[4] *Way of Perfection*, ch. iv.

make light of honour, and be detached from our possessions. We may also imitate the Saints by striving after solitude and silence, and many other virtues.

Second Point

God bestows on souls united to him so intense a desire neither ever to displease him, in however small a matter, nor to commit any avoidable imperfection, that were there no other reason, they would try to avoid society, and they greatly envy those who live in deserts.[1] On the other hand, they seek to live amidst men in the hopes of helping if but one soul to praise God better. In the case of a woman, she grieves over the impediment offered by her sex, and envies those who are free to proclaim aloud to all who is this mighty God of hosts.

Such a person wishes she had a thousand lives to spend for God; she would have all earthly creatures changed into as many tongues to praise him on her account.[2] She longs to perform most severe penances, nor do they cost her much, for the power of her love almost prevents their being felt.[3] They are not transient, but permanent desires; when opportunity occurs of acting on them, they prove genuine. A soul that has attained to this is not limited to the desires she has to serve God; for His Majesty gives it strength to bring those desires to effect. Nothing can be put before it unto which it will not throw itself, if only it thinks that God may be served thereby; and yet it believes it is doing nothing, because, as I said before, it sees clearly that all is nothing, except pleasing God.

Third Point

But how can I say that those desires are permanent, when at times the soul feels cowardly in the most trivial matters and too timorous to undertake any work for God?[4] Have you never found this out yourselves, Christian souls?[5]

[1] *Interior Castle*, vith Mansion, ch. vi. [2] Ch. iv.
[3] Ch vi. [4] *Interior Castle*, vith Mansion, ch. vi.
[5] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiii.

I certainly have. Sometimes I fancy that I am very detached, as I really am, when it comes to the trial. Yet, at another time I discover that I am so attached to things which I should perhaps have laughed at the day before, that I hardly know myself. Again, I feel such courage, that there is nothing I should fear to do in God's service, and I find, when it comes to the proof, that I am brave as regards some matters—yet, next day I should not venture to kill an ant for him if I met with any opposition. Sometimes I care nothing if people talk or complain of me ; and very often, indeed, it has even given me pleasure. Yet there are occasions when a single word disturbs me, and I long to leave this world, for everything in it disgusts me. I am not the only person to whom this happens, for I have noticed it in people better than myself, and I know that it is a fact.

I believe it is because our Lord, for its greater good, then leaves the soul to its natural weakness, which at once convinces it so thoroughly that any strength it possessed came from His Majesty; as to destroy self-love and to endure it, with a greater knowledge of the mercy and greatness of God, which he deigned to show forth in one so vile. However, the soul is usually in the former state.

Colloquy

Have pity on thy servant. O my God, and so dispose her always that she may be able to accomplish some of her desires for thy honour and glory![1] Take no account of the poverty of her merits, nor of the vileness of her nature, O Lord! Thou who hast the power to compel the vast ocean to retire, and didst force the wide river Jordan to draw back, that the children of Israel might pass through! Yet spare her not, for aided by thy strength she can endure many trials. She is resolved to do so ; she desires to suffer them. Stretch forth thine arm, O Lord, to help her, lest she waste her life in trifles! Let it cost her what it may, and as dear as she desires, for she longs to lose a thousand lives to lead one soul to praise thee but a little better. If

[1] *Interior Castle,* vith Mansion, ch. vi.

as many lives were hers to give, she would count them well spent in such a cause, knowing as a truth most certain, that she is unworthy to bear the lightest cross, much less to die for thee.

Resolution

Let us try to be distrustful of ourselves and place all our confidence in God.[1]

READING

St Teresa, when a Child, inflamed with a Desire for Martyrdom leaves her Father's House with her Brother

"The brothers and sisters were very fond of one another. Teresa loved them all, but very especially her brother Rodrigo, her inseparable companion. She says: 'I felt a special affection for a brother of about my own age.' Rodrigo had a shade of condescension for 'the little one', the *nino*, as he called her; he did not suspect that, as is often the case, she sometimes acted as his protector instead. Woman's nature, even in childhood, has the instinct and power of persuasion.

"Teresa made little account of her brother's four years of seniority. She spoke of him as of her own age, and, as we shall see, opened him the way and drew him after her.

"During the summer season, Alfonso Sanchez and his family left the Plazuela Santo Domingo for the country; they probably stayed with Teresa de las Cuevas, the Saint's grandmother, who lived at Olmedo, near Medina del Campo, and cheered her loneliness by their childish gaiety. Teresa was a Castilian of the school: she could not sign her name, but knew how to train her children and servants in the fear of God. She was very fond of her daughter Beatriz, between whom and her son Juan de Ahumada she divided her property, a year after the birth of St Teresa, greatly to Beatriz's advantage.

[1] *Life*, ch. xi.

"As a rule, the family spent the summer at Goterrendura, a village three miles to the north of Avila, overlooking a hill at whose foot ran the river Berlana. As it was dependent on the parish of San Juan, Alfonso and Beatriz had been married in its little church. The Cepeda estate comprised several buildings, some ground with a dove-cot, a vineyard, several cultivated fields and grass-land, which afforded grazing for three flocks, each of a thousand sheep. This constituted the dowry of Dona Beatriz when she married.

"How Teresa and her brothers must have enjoyed their country holiday! They used to visit the dove-cot and feed its inmates. Later on, when she founded her convents, she loved to call them 'Our Lady's dove-arks,' and this formed the subject of one of her finest passages on prayer.

"Then the children visited the flocks and noticed how each sheep was branded with the mark of the Cepeda, by the *bierro de berrar ovejas*, the iron instrument in one of the big almiras of Avila. Perhaps they may have watched the branding. It seems to have been in St Teresa's mind when she wrote: 'Do you know what it is to be truly spiritual? It is to become the slave of God and to bear his brand, which is that of the cross.'

"But when the question is of reading together in the shade of the trees, Teresa always chooses Rodrigo for her companion; as it seems, Juan and Hernando did not care for books. Teresa and Rodrigo never tired of them. The 'little one', however, is only six years old. 'We read the lives of the Saints,' she says, 'and I thought the martyrs purchased heaven cheaply by the torments they endured for God; I longed to share their lot. It was not because I felt a love for God, but because I wanted to gain the immense happiness in heaven which the books promised me.'

"What impressed itself most upon the children's minds was the thought of eternity. 'We were extremely surprised,' writes Teresa, 'when we read that hell and heaven will last for ever. We talked about it continually and used to repeat: "For ever, for ever, for ever!" After I had said these words for a certain number of times, child as I was, God gave me the grace to realize the true way by which to come to him.' The little girl repeated: 'Happiness or torment without

end await my soul: for ever.' Rodrigo in less serious tone exclaimed: 'For ever, for ever, Teresa!'

"Teresa and Rodrigo pored over the same books at Avila, as they had returned from Goterrendura. They talked them over, and the little girl revolved in her imagination plans that would gain her speedy entrance into heaven. 'My brother and I considered which could be the best means to attain this. We decided to go to the country of the Moor, begging for alms on the way for the love of God, in the hope of being beheaded by the infidels. Young as we were, I believe that God gave us the courage to carry out our project. But how could we do so? Our parents were, in our eyes, the greater obstacle.'

"Yet, though only seven years, Teresa thought this obstacle could be surmounted. The two children arranged that, taking a small supply of food with them, they would slip away unnoticed from their home, cross the Adaja and go to the hermitage close by, in order to place under the patronage of our Lady the enterprise which would give such glory to God and bliss to themselves. She intended to follow the high road to Salamanca, which surely would lead them to the country of the infidels.

"On the day arranged, Teresa and Rodrigo, evading the vigilance of their mother and their elder sister Maria, passed through one of the southern gates of the town outside the fortified precincts. They crossed the bridge and reached the hermitage, where they knelt before our Lady of Charity. After a short prayer—for they feared pursuit—they hurried along the road, no doubt to the astonishment of some of the passers-by.

"They felt safer, and Teresa already dreamed of the crown she was to win, when a man on horseback met them. Rodrigo blushed, for he recognized his uncle, Francisco Alvarez de Cepeda, his father's brother. Teresa would not stop and tried to drag her brother after her, but he refused to follow and stood abashed.

"Francisco Alvarez stopped: he saw at once that the children had escaped unknown, and he took them back to their home, where everyone was in commotion at their absence. Dona Beatriz thought they must have fallen down

the well at the end of the garden. As their father is not mentioned, he must have been away from home.

"The culprits had to give explanations. Rodrigo faltered in his role of hero and martyr at the sight of his mother's distress and the curiosity of his brothers and the servants. He made excuses: it was the 'little one' who had persuaded him. No doubt Teresa stood firm, but she was deeply grieved, and mourned for many a day the happy fate of which she had been deprived. This event probably happened in 1522. (*Les Parents de Sainte Thérèse,* ch. iii-v.)

THIRD MEDITATION

LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR

PRELUDE.—True perfection consists in the love of God and our neighbour, and the better we keep both these commandments, the more perfect shall we be. I beg you, Christians, to remember the necessity of mutual affection.[1]

FIRST POINT

Our Lord asks but two things of us: love for him and for our neighbour: these are what we must strive to obtain.[2] If we practise both these virtues perfectly we shall be doing his will and so shall be united to him. But as I said, we are very far from obeying and serving our great Master perfectly in these two matters: may His Majesty give us the grace to merit union with him; it is in our power to gain it if we will.

I think the most certain sign that we keep these two commandments is that we have a genuine love for others. We cannot know whether we love God, although there may be strong reasons for thinking so, but there can be no doubt about whether we love our neighbour or no. Be sure that in proportion as you advance in fraternal charity, you are increasing in your love of God, for His Majesty bears so tender an affection for us that I cannot doubt he will repay our love for others by augmenting, in a thousand different ways, that which we bear for him. We should watch most carefully over ourselves in this matter, for if we are perfect on this point we have done all. I believe human nature is so evil that we could not feel a perfect charity for our neighbour unless it were rooted in the love of God.

Those who are careful not to offend God, and who enter the religious state, think there is nothing more to do. How

[1] *Interior Castle*, IST Mansion, ch. ii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VTH Mansion, ch. iii.

many maggots remain in hiding until, like the worm which gnawed at Jonas' ivy, they have destroyed our virtues. These pests are such evils as self-love, self-esteem, rash judgement of others even in small matters, and a want of charity in not loving our neighbour quite as much as ourselves.

Second Point

It is good, it is necessary at times, to show some tenderness in our love, and even to feel it; we must sympathize with many of our sisters' trials and weaknesses, insignificant as they may be.[1] Sometimes a trifling matter gives as much pain to one person as a heavy cross would cause another. Sensitive natures feel very keenly slight troubles which others would laugh at. If you are stronger-minded, still pity your neighbours, and do not be astonished at them. Perhaps the devil has taken more trouble to wound their feelings thus than he has to grieve you by severe trials and crosses. It may be that our Lord spares us these sufferings to give us trials of other kinds, when perhaps what seems, and is, indeed, a heavy cross to us, will appear but a light one to our brethren.

We must not judge others by ourselves in such cases, nor compare ourselves to them at a time, when, perhaps through no effort of our own, our Lord has given us greater fortitude. Rather let us estimate ourselves by our weakest moments. There is need for this if we would know how to condole with our neighbours' griefs. Especially is this necessary for more courageous souls, who, as they long for crosses, make little of their troubles. These should remember what they used to feel while they were still weak, and should reflect that, if they have improved, it is not their own doing. Otherwise, the devil may gradually cool our charity for others, and lead us into mistaking an error for perfection. Constant care and vigilance are needed: Satan never sleeps, and is always wide awake when he watches more perfect souls; then his temptations are more subtle than ever, for

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. vii.

he dare use no others; and unless we are very cautious, the mischief is done before we know it.

In this most important matter we should be most vigilant in little things, and take no notice of the great works we plan during prayer, which we imagine that we would perform for other people: even, perhaps, for the sake of saving a single soul.[1] If our actions afterwards belie these grand schemes, there is no reason to imagine that we should do anything of the sort. I say the same of humility and other virtues. The devil's wiles are many; he would turn hell upside down a thousand times to make us think ourselves better than we are. He has good reason for it, for such fancies are most injurious; sham virtues springing from this root are always accompanied by a vainglory never found in those of divine origin, which are free from pride.

Third Point

O Christians! how easy it is to know which of you have attained to a sincere love for your neighbour, and which of you are far from it![2] If you knew the importance of that virtue, your only care would be to gain it.

When I see people very anxious to know what sort of prayer they practise, covering their faces and afraid to move or think, lest they should lose any slight tenderness and devotion they feel, I know how little they understand how to attain union with God, since they think it consist in such things as these. No, Christians, no; our Lord expects *works* from us! If you see a sick person you can relieve, never fear losing your devotion; compassionate her; if she is in pain, feel for it as if it were your own, and, when there is need, fast so that she may eat, not so much for her sake as because you know your Lord asks it of you. If someone else is well spoken of, be more pleased than if it were yourself; this is easy enough, for if you were really humble, it would vex you to be praised. It is a great good to rejoice at your

[1] *Interior Castle*, VTH Mansion, ch. iii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VTH Mansion, ch. iii.

neighbour's virtues being known, and to feel as sorry for the fault you see in her as if it were yours, hiding it from the sight of others.

If we fail in this virtue, I know that all is lost: please God, this may never be your case. If you possess fraternal charity, I assure you that you will certainly attain to union with our Lord. If you are conscious that you are wanting in this charity, although you may feel devotion and sweetness (which makes you think you have attained to union with God), believe me, you have not yet reached it. Beg our Lord to grant you perfect love for your neighbour, and leave the rest to him. He will give you more than you know how to desire if you constrain yourselves and strive with all your power to gain it, forcing your will as far as possible to comply in all things with your neighbours' wishes, although you may sometimes forfeit your own rights by so doing. Forget your self-interests for theirs, however much nature may rebel; when opportunity occurs, take some burden upon yourself to ease your neighbour of it. Do not fancy that it will cost you nothing and that you will find it all done for you; think what the love he bore for us cost Jesus Christ, who, to free us from death, himself suffered the most painful death of all—the death of the Cross.

Colloquy

Oh! my Jesus! how deep is thy love for the children of men![1] The greatest service we can render thee is to leave thee for the sake of loving and aiding them. Then do we possess thee most entirely, for though our will enjoy thee less, yet love delights to please thee. During this mortal life, all worldly delights are found to be uncertain, even though they seem to come from thee, unless the love of our neighbour bears them company. Who loves not his brethren loves not thee, my Lord, for thy blood, shed for us, bears witness to thy boundless love for the sons of Adam.

O my God! I beg this of thee with my whole will, from

[1] *Exclamations*, ii.

the bottom of my heart, and that I have done so more than once, and I account it a blessing to lose the greatest blessings which may be had on earth, if thou wouldst but bestow these graces upon him who will make a better use of them to the increase of thy glory.[1]

Resolution

Look upon yourself as the servant of all; see Christ in others, and you will show them respect and reverence. Listen to or speak ill of no one, but yourself.[2]

READING

St Teresa's Love for her Neighbour shown in Small Things

"Even from her novitiate at the convent of the Incarnation, she was ingenious during the day in exercising charity. When evening came, did she discover that she had not had any occasion to practise this virtue, she would go to the choir to visit the mantles left by the religious in their stalls, and mended those she found torn, and there could have been a good number, since there were no less than two hundred nuns. At other times she would place herself at the staircase with a little lantern, so as to keep from accidents those who went down without light and to give it to those who wished to have it." (*Related by Da. Maria Pinel, Religious of the Incarnation.*)

From the beginning of her religious life and all life throughout Teresa had deep respect for the reputation of her neighbour. We have already cited the words by which, with her ordinary candour, she tells how her care for avoiding the least detraction became so well known that the noise spread around. It was said that where Teresa de Ahumada was, the reputation of the absent was safe. (See *Life written by herself*, ch. v.)

She gave herself up, besides, with so much fervour to relieve the sick, as Ribera reports, that she merited, while

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii. [2] *Maxims.*

at the convent of the Incarnation, the reputation of a "great infirmarian." In her Reform, the care of the sick was always the object of her pressing recommendations. When their poverty was such that she could not procure the refreshments she desired, she went to the garden herself to cull flowers and foliage, and would put them in their hands to refresh and give them pleasure. (*Dep. of V. Mother Ann of Jesus.*)

"When people from outside came for consolation, however busy she was, she would leave everything to give them the comfort they needed. She did so more readily if the matter concerned poor people. Everyone went away comforted, because our Lord had endowed her with special grace on this point.

"One day, during meal-time, she was told that a poor woman in great affliction stood at the turn and wished to speak to her. She rose at once from the table to go to her. A nun advised her to rest a little, saying she might go after taking her food. 'My true rest and food,' replied the Saint, 'is to comfort such souls.' Then she went and conversed with this poor afflicted creature." (*Dep. of Fr. Francisca of Jesus.*)

"During the preliminary arrangements at Burgos," Blessed Ann of St Bartholomew wrote in her simple manner, "the holy Mother and her daughters moved to a hospital. The rooms given to us were in such bad state that nobody wished to occupy them. We found there plenty of bats, but very little shelter from the cold. The holy Mother, owing to the illness she was attacked by, had much to suffer in this place. However, when we pitied her, she would reply that the place was too comfortable for her and that she did not deserve to occupy it; that she grieved for us, but in no way for herself, because she was unworthy to lodge in the hospital. When we made a very small bed for her, she said: 'O my Master! what a delightful bed, whereas thou wert on a cross!' She could not eat without causing a wound she had in the throat to bleed, and if we compassionated her, she would say: 'My Master suffered more when he drank gall and vinegar.'

"One day, when suffering from severe nausea, she said

she could eat some oranges. During the day a lady sent her some excellent ones. As soon as she saw them, she put them in her sleeves, and said she would go downstairs and see a patient who was groaning very much. She went down and distributed the oranges to the poor. When asked why she gave them: 'It was for them more than for myself', she said, 'that I wished these oranges. I am delighted because the sick are quite happy.' In fact, her face was radiant with joy.

"Another time some limes were brought to her. At once she said: 'God be praised! Now I am able to give something to my dear patients.' Another day they were dressing a poor man who had posthume. He screamed so dreadfully that he wearied the others. The holy Mother, moved by compassion, went down to the patient's room. At the sight of her, the poor man was quiet, 'My son,' she said, 'why do you scream so? Will you not bear with your ailments in patience, for the love of God?' He replied: 'It seems to me they are tearing my soul from my body.' The holy Mother stayed some time with him. He assured her that his pains had left him, and never afterwards when they dressed him did they hear him complain any more.

"These poor people begged the nurse to bring this holy lady to them often, because the mere sight of her comforted them greatly and softened their sufferings. When they learnt that we were to leave they wept, and grieved keenly at the holy Mother's departure." (*Relation on the Virtues of St Teresa.*)

FOURTH MEDITATION

ACTIVE WORK

PRELUDE.—Our Lord said this to me one day: "Thinkest thou, my daughter, that merit lies in fruition? No; merit lies only in doing, in suffering, and in loving." Once, when I was thinking how many faults I must be guilty of when I have business to transact, I heard this: "Strive thou always after a good intention in all things, and detachment; lift up thine eyes to me and see that all thine actions may resemble mine."[1]

FIRST POINT

It must be understood that what relates to obedience, and the good of our neighbour, to the doing of which charity constrains us, must not be hindered thereby, for on such occasions, when either of these two is required of us, we must give up for the time that which we so much long to give to God; which, as we regard it, is to be alone, meditating upon him, and rejoicing in his consolations.[2] To give this up for either of the other two is to give pleasure to our Lord and do it for him. As he himself has said: "What ye did for one of these little ones ye did for me."[3]

If, then, this be true, whence comes that inward dissatisfaction which we generally feel when we have not passed the greater part of the day alone and absorbed in God, even though we were occupied in other ways? From two sources, I think: one, and this is the chief, is self-love, which thrusts itself in here in a most subtle way, and accordingly escapes detection; that is, we would please ourselves rather than God. For it is clear that when a soul has begun to taste how sweet our Lord is, it finds more pleasure at being

[1] *Relations*, iii. [2] *Foundations*, ch. v.
[3] *Quamdiu fecistis uni ex fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis* (Matt. xxv 40).

at ease, abstaining from bodily labour, and receiving consolation.[1]

Oh, the charity of those who truly love our Lord, and who understand their own state! How scanty the rest they will be able to take if they but see they can in any degree help a single soul to advance, and to love God more, or to be able to comfort it in any way, or rescue it from any danger! How ill at ease such souls will be when they are at rest! And when they cannot help them in act they have recourse to prayer, beseeching our Lord on behalf of many souls whom it grieves them to see going to ruin: they abandon their own comfort, and look on it as well lost, for they think not of their own rest, but only how they may conform more and more to the will of our Lord.

Second Point

The second source of this dissatisfaction, in my opinion, is that the soul seems to live in greater purity when left in solitude, because there are fewer opportunities therein of offending God; some, however, there must be, for the evil spirits and we ourselves are everywhere. For if the soul is afraid of offending God, it is a very great consolation for it to meet with nothing to make it fall; and certainly this seems to me a stronger reason for desiring to avoid all intercourse with the world than is that which is grounded on the fact that solitude ministers great consolations and sweetness in God.

It is here, Christian souls, love must be known; not in secret places, but in the midst of temptations; and trust me, our gain will be incomparably greater, though there may be more faults committed, and even some slight falls. Remember, in all I say I am taking for granted that you run these risks under obedience and out of charity, and if it be not so, my conclusion always is that to be alone is better; and, moreover, we ought to desire to be alone even when employed in the way I am speaking of; in truth, this desire

[1] *Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus* (Ps. xxiii 3).

is ever present in those souls that really love God. The reason why I say it again is this : it makes us know what we are, and how far our virtue can reach. A person always alone, however holy he may think himself to be, does not know whether he possesses patience and humility, and has no means of learning. A man may be very courageous, but how is it to be known if he has not been seen in battle? St Peter considered himself very brave, but look at him when he was tried : however, he rose again after his fall, not trusting at all to himself ; and from henceforth placed all his confidence in God, and afterwards suffered martyrdom, as we know.

O my God, if we but knew how great is our wretchedness ! There is danger in everything if we do not know it, and for that reason it is a great blessing to us that we are under authority, so that we may discern our own meanness.

Third Point

I consider one day of humbling self-knowledge, which may have cost us much sorrow and distress, to be a greater grace of our Lord than many days of prayer ; moreover, he who is a true lover loves everywhere, and always remembers the object of his love. It would be hard if we could pray only in secret places. I see now that I cannot be alone for many hours. But, O my Lord ! how mighty before thee is a single sigh rising up from the heart, because of the pain it gives to us to see that we have not only to tarry in this our exile, but also that we find no opportunity of being alone, so that we might alone have the fruition of thyself.

Here it is plain that we are his slaves, sold for love of him, with our own consent, to the virtue of obedience, seeing that for its sake we give up in a certain way the fruition of God himself, and it is nothing, if we consider that he in obedience came down from the bosom of his Father, to make himself a slave to us. How then can he be recompensed for this, or what service can we give him in return for this grace? It is necessary to be on our guard in our employments, though laid upon us by obedience and charity, lest we should be careless therein, not lifting up our hearts continually to God.

And believe me, it is not length of time that enables a soul to make progress in prayer ; if it is given up to active work also, that is a great help whereby the soul in a very short time may attain to a better preparation for the enkindling of its love than it could attain to by many hours spent in meditation. All has to come from his hand. May he be blest for ever and ever.

Colloquy

Often do I think, O my Lord, that if aught can soothe a life apart from thee it is solitude, wherein the soul rests with him who is its true repose.[1] Yet unable as it is to enjoy thee with full liberty, its torment often redoubles, yet this is a delight compared with that of being forced to deal with creatures, and thus deprived of holding converse alone with the Creator. But how is it, my God, that rest wearies the soul which only seeks to please thee ?

O sovereign love of God, how different are thine effects from those of earthly love, which seeks no companion, fearing lest it should lose what it possesses ! Love for my God increases on learning that others love him, and its joy diminishes at seeing that all men do not share its happiness.

Therefore, O my only Good ! during thy tenderest caresses and consolations, I grieve at remembering the many hearts which do not desire these joys, and still others who will lose them for ever. Thus my soul seeks company, gladly leaving its own delight, moved by the hope that it may incite souls to strive to attain it.

Resolution

If obedience employs you in outward things, be not discouraged ; know that even if you are in the kitchen, our Lord moves amidst the pots and pans, helping you both within and without.[2]

[1] *Exclamations*, ii.

[2] *Foundations*, ch. v.

READING

Examples of Spiritual Progress made by those engaged in Active Work, given by St Teresa

It would be a strange thing if, when God clearly told us to betake ourselves to some work that concerns him, we were to do nothing but stand still and gaze upon him because that gives us a greater joy. A pleasant progress this in the love of God!—to tie his hands through an opinion that he can do us good only in one way.

I know of some, and have lived among them—I put on one side my own experience, as I said before—who taught me the truth of this; when I was myself in great distress because of the little time I had, and accordingly was sorry to see them always employed and having much to do, because they were under obedience, and was thinking within myself, and even said as much to them, that spiritual growth was not possible amidst so much hurry and confusion, for they had then not grown much. O Lord, how different are thy ways from what we imagined them to be! and how thou, if a soul be determined to love thee and resigned in thy hands, askest nothing of it but obedience; the sure knowledge of what is for thy greater honour and the desire to do it. That soul need not seek out means, nor make a choice of any, for its will is already thine. Thou, O Lord, hast taken upon thyself to guide it in the way most profitable to it. And even if the superior be not mindful of that soul's profit, but only of the duties to be discharged in the community, thou, O my God, art mindful of it; thou preparest its ways, and orderest the things we have to do, so that we find ourselves, without knowing how, by faithfully observing, for the love of God, the commands that are laid upon us, spiritually growing and making great progress, which afterwards fills us with wonder.

So it was with one whom I conversed with not many days since. He had been for fifteen years under obedience, charged with laborious offices and the government of others—so much so that he could not call to mind one day that he had had to himself; nevertheless he contrived to find, the best way he could, some time every day for prayer, and to have a

conscience without offence. He is one whose soul is the most given to obedience that I ever saw, and he impresses that virtue on everyone he has to do with. Our Lord has amply rewarded him, for he finds himself, he knows not how, in possession of that liberty of spirit, so prized and so desired, which the perfect have, and wherein lies all the happiness that can be wished for in this life; for, seeking nothing, he possesses all things. Such souls fear nothing, desire nothing on earth; no troubles disturb them, no pleasures touch them; in a word, nobody can rob them of their peace, for it rests on God alone, and, as nobody can rob them of him, nothing but the fear of losing him can give them any pain; for everything else in this world is, in their opinion as if it were not, because it can neither make nor mar their happiness.

O blessed obedience, and blessed the distraction caused thereby, by which we gain so much. That person is not the only one, for I have known others like him, of whom, not having seen them for very many years, I asked how they had been spending the time that had gone by; all of it had been spent in the labours of obedience and of charity: on the other hand, I observed such spiritual prosperity as made me marvel. Well then, my children, be not discouraged, for if obedience employs you in outward things, know that even if you are in the kitchen our Lord moves amidst the pots and pans, helping us both within and without.

I remember being told by a religious that he was resolved, and had made up his mind in earnest, never to refuse to do anything his superior enjoined him, whatever the labour might be; and that one day, wearied with work and unable to stand, in the evening as he was going to rest for a while, his superior met him, and told him to take a spade and go and dig in the garden. He did not say a word, though naturally greatly distressed, so much so that he could not work; he took up a spade, and going along a passage which led to the garden—I saw it many years after he had told me of it when I was trying to found a house in that place—he saw our Lord before him with his Cross on his shoulders, so worn and wearied that he felt his own weariness to be nothing in comparison with his. (*Foundations* ch. v.)

TENTH DAY

FIRST MEDITATION

LOVE FOR THE PERSON OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

PRELUDE.—Our Lord, showing his great love for me, says to me very often: "Thou art mine, and I am thine." I am in the habit of answering, and I believe in all sincerity: "What do I care for myself? I care only for thee, O my Lord."[1]

FIRST POINT

When our Lord is pleased to caress the soul in a most special way, he shows it in vision his most sacred humanity under whatever form he chooses: either as he was during his life on earth, or after his resurrection.[2] The splendour of him who is revealed in the vision resembles an infused light, as of the sun covered with a veil as transparent as a diamond, if such a texture could be woven, while his raiment looks like fine linen.

The vision of Christ left behind an impression of his exceeding beauty, and it remains with me to this day.[3] One vision of him alone is enough to effect this; what, then, must all those visions have done, which our Lord in his mercy sent me? One exceedingly great blessing has resulted therefrom, and it is this—I had one grievous fault, which was the source of much evil; namely, whenever I found anybody well disposed towards myself, and I liked him, I used to have such an affection for him as compelled me always to remember and think of him, though I had no intention of offending God; however, I was pleased to see him, to think of him and of his good qualities. All this was so hurtful, that it brought my soul to the very verge of destruction.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxix. [2] *Interior Castle*, vith Mansion, ch. ix.
[3] *Life*, ch. xxxvii.

But ever since I saw the great beauty of our Lord I never saw anyone who in comparison with him seemed even endurable, or that could occupy my thoughts. For if I but turn mine eyes inwardly for a moment to the contemplation of the image which I have within me, I find myself so free, that from that instant everything I see is loathsome in comparison with the excellences and graces of which I had a vision in our Lord. Neither is there any sweetness, nor any kind of pleasure, which I can make any account of, compared with that which comes from hearing but one word from his divine mouth. What, then, must it be when I hear so many?

Second Point

I see clearly that if we are to please God, and if he is to give us great graces, everything must pass through the hands of the most sacred humanity in whom His Majesty said that he is well pleased.[1] I know this by repeated experience, and our Lord has told it me. I have seen clearly that it is the door by which we are to enter, if we would have his supreme Majesty reveal to us great secrets.

So, then, I would have you, Christian souls, seek no other way, even if you had arrived at the highest contemplation. This way is safe. Some writers, however, advise us much to withdraw from all bodily imagination, and draw near to the contemplation of the Divinity. They think that, as this work of contemplation is wholly spiritual, any bodily object whatever can disturb or hinder it. They say that the contemplative should regard himself as being within a definite space, God everywhere around, and himself absorbed in him.

This seems to me right enough now and then; but to withdraw altogether from Christ, and to compare his divine Body with our miseries or with any created thing whatever, is what I cannot endure. I am not contradicting them, for they are learned and spiritual persons, understanding what they say; God, too, is guiding souls by many ways and methods.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxii.

It is of my own soul that I wish to speak now—I do not intermeddle with others—and of the danger I was in because I would comply with the directions I was reading.

O Lord of my soul, and my Good! Jesus Christ crucified! I never think of this opinion which I held—that your sacred humanity was a hindrance to prayer—without pain; I believe it was an act of high treason, though done in ignorance. Hitherto, I had been all my life long so devout to the sacred humanity. I did not continue long of this opinion, and so I returned to my habit of delighting in our Lord, particularly at Communion. Is it possible, O my Lord, that I could have had the thought, if only for an hour, that thou couldst be a hindrance to my greatest good? Whence are all my blessings? Are they not from thee?

Third Point

I say again, this way is safe. Our Lord is he by whom all good things come to us. He will teach you. Consider his life; that is the best example. What more can we want than so good a friend at our side, who will not forsake us when we are in trouble and distress, as they do who belong to this world! Blessed is he who truly loves him, and who always has him near him! Let us consider the glorious St Paul, who seems as if Jesus was never absent from his lips, as if he had him deep down in his heart. After I had heard this of some great Saints given to contemplation, I considered the matter carefully; and I see that they walked in no other way. St Francis with the stigmata proves it; St Antony of Padua with the Infant Jesus; St Bernard rejoiced in the sacred humanity; so did St Catherine of Siena, and many others.

It is a great matter for us to have our Lord before us as man while we are living and in the flesh. When we have many things to do, when we are persecuted and in trouble, when we cannot have much rest, and when we have our seasons of dryness, Christ is our best Friend; for we regard him as man, and behold him faint and in trouble, and he is our companion. With so good a Friend and Captain, ever

present, himself the first to suffer, everything can be borne. He helps, he strengthens, he never fails, he is the true Friend.

It seems to me as if His Majesty were going about to try those who love him—now one, now another—revealing himself in supreme joy, so as to quicken our belief, if it should be dead, in what he will give us, saying, "Behold! this is but a drop of the immense sea of blessings"; for he leaves nothing undone for those he loves; and as he sees them receive it, so he gives, and he gives himself. He loves those who love him. Oh! how dear he is! how good a Friend. Love draws forth love. And though we are only at the very beginning, and exceedingly wicked, yet let us always labour to keep this in view, and stir ourselves up to love; for if once our Lord grants us this grace of having this love imprinted in our hearts, everything will be easy, and we shall do great things in a very short time, and with very little labour.

Colloquy

When thou wilt, O Lord, thou dost quickly cure the wound thou hast inflicted; until then, vain is all hope of healing or joy save that found in suffering for so good a cause.[1]

O true Lover! how tenderly, how sweetly, with what joy and caresses, with what infinite signs of love dost thou heal these wounds, opened by thee with the arrows of love itself!

O my God, Comforter of all sorrows, how foolish I am! What human remedy can avail those injured by the divine fire? Who can penetrate the depths of this wound, or tell whence it came, or how such keen yet delicious torture can be soothed? How senseless to fancy that such a precious ill could be cured by anything so common as human art.

Well does the Bride say in the Canticles: "My Beloved to me and I to my Beloved." "My Beloved to me," for no such love could spring from love so base as mine; yet if my love be base, my Bridegroom, why does it pass by all creatures until it reaches its Creator?

O my God! Why "I to my Beloved"? Thou, my true Lover, didst begin this war of love, which seems nothing

[1] *Exclamations*. xv.

but an inquietude and failing of all the powers and senses, which go through the streets and lanes, imploring the daughters of Jerusalem to tell them where is their God. Against whom do the powers of the soul strive, during this contest, save him who has taken possession of the fortress they once held—the highest part of the soul? From this he has ejected them, and they now return to oust their Conqueror; at last, weary of absence from him, they yield themselves up. Thus, losing all their strength, they fight far better than before, and by surrendering to their Victor, triumph over him finally.

O my soul! what a blessed conflict hast thou waged during this trial, and how truly has this been thy case. Since "My Beloved is to me and I to my Beloved," who will strive to separate and extinguish two such ardent flames? It would be labour lost, for they are now one.

Resolution

Whenever we think of Christ, let us remind ourselves of the love that made him bestow so many graces upon us, and also how great that love is which our Lord God has shown us in giving us such a pledge of the love he bears us.[1]

READING

Some Particulars about St Teresa's Intimate Intercourse with our Lord

"Very notable things passed in connection with this servant of God. It seemed to her that Jesus Christ our Lord spoke to her and gave her instructions, revealing to her mysteries and secret events concerning the heretics of France and what she herself was to do. Sometimes God directed her to deliver messages to her confessors and others. She believed that at her right hand she saw our Lord. Jesus, her divine Master, appeared again, and comforting her and

[1] *Life* ch. xxii.

giving her strong reasons for recognizing that what she experienced was not the work of Satan.

"Another time, while our Lord was conversing with her, she said to His Majesty: 'Hast thou not, O Lord, other servants of thine, to whom thou canst address thyself, such as men and theologians? If thou speakest to them, they would certainly comply with thy wishes far better, think I, who am so wretched.' Our Lord replied very sadly: 'Men and theologians care not for disposing themselves for familiar intercourse with me; so, rejected by them and in need of someone, I seek mere women with whom I may solace myself and treat of my affairs.'

"Once I asked her how she spent her time. I supposed she gave some hours to mental prayer and the rest to other exercises. I meant to open the way to some confidence as to anything that could cause her uneasiness of conscience or trouble. She replied: 'Imagine, Father, a person so deeply in love with another, that she cannot pass a moment without the presence of the Beloved. I feel this and much more regarding our Lord. My only joy is to be near him, to speak to him or of him.'" (*Relation of Father Pedro Ibanez. We remind the reader again that the relation of Father Ibanez was given twenty years before St Teresa's death.*)

Let us now hear the Saint herself recording one of the most extraordinary demonstrations of love she received from her Saviour and Spouse.

"In the monastery of the Incarnation, and in the second year of my being prioress there, on the octave of St Martin, when I was going to Communion, the Father—Fray John of the Cross—divided the Host between me and another sister. I thought it was done, not because there was any want of Hosts, but that he wished to mortify me because I had told him how much I delighted in Hosts of a large size. Yet I was not ignorant that the size of the Host is of no moment; for I knew that our Lord is whole and entire in the smallest particle. His Majesty said to me: 'Have no fear, my daughter; for no one will be able to separate thee from me.' Giving me to understand that the size of the Host mattered not.

"Then appearing to me, as on other occasions, in an imaginary vision, most interiorly, he held out his right hand

and said: 'Behold this nail! It is the pledge of thy being my bride from this day forth. Until now thou hadst not merited it; from henceforth thou shalt regard my honour, not only as of one who is thy Creator, King, and God, but as thine, my veritable bride; my honour is thine, and thine is mine.' This grace had such an effect on me that I could not contain myself: I became as one who is foolish, and said to our Lord: 'Either ennoble my vileness or cease to bestow such mercies on me, for certainly I do not think that nature can bear them.' I remained thus the whole day, as one beside herself. Afterwards I became conscious of great progress, and greater shame and distress to see that I did nothing in return for graces so great." (*Relations*, iii.)

SECOND MEDITATION

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

PRELUDE—God is not like man in his ways: he knows our weakness.[1] Blessed be he who can, when he pleases, draw good out of all my faults![2]

FIRST POINT

My love of, and trust in, our Lord, after I had seen him in a vision, began to grow, for my converse with him was so continual.[3] I saw that, though he was God, he was man also; that he is not surprised at the frailties of men; that he understands our miserable nature, liable to fall continually, because of the first sin, for the reparation of which he had come. I could speak to him as to a friend, though he is my Lord, because I do not consider him as one of our earthly lords, who affect a power they do not possess, who give audience at fixed hours, and to whom only certain persons may speak. If a poor man has any business with these, it will cost him many goings and comings, and currying favour with others, together with much pain and labour before he can speak to them. Ah! if such a one has business with a King! Poor people, not of gentle blood, cannot approach him, for they must apply to those who are his friends, and certainly these are not persons who tread the world under their feet. But, O my Lord, into thy presence we do not require chamberlains to be introduced.

Oh, how good is God! How good is our Lord, and how powerful![4] He gives not counsel only, but relief as well. His words are deeds. As he strengthens our faith, love grows.[5] Hitherto I thought I had need of others, and I had more reliance on worldly helps. Now I clearly understand that all men are bunches of dried rosemary, and that there

[1] *Life*, ch. xxvi. [2] Ch. xxxix. [3] *Life*, ch. xxxix.
[4] Ch. xxv. [5] *Relations*, iii.

is no safety in leaning on them, for if they are pressed by contradictions or evil speaking, they break down. And so I know by experience that the only way not to fall is to cling to the cross, and put our trust in him who was nailed thereto. I find him a real friend, and with him I find myself endowed with such might that, God never failing me, I think I should be able to withstand the whole world if it were against me. We have on our side the King omnipotent, our Lord most high, who can do all things, and subjects all things to himself. There is nothing to be afraid of if we walk, as I said before, in the truth, in the sight of His Majesty, with a pure conscience.

Second Point

I used frequently to recollect how our Lord, when the tempest arose, commanded the winds to be still over the sea.[1] So I said to myself: "Who is he, that all my faculties should thus obey him? Who is he that gives light in such darkness in a moment; who softens a heart that seemed to be made of stone; who gives the waters of sweet tears, where for a long time great dryness seems to have prevailed; who inspires these desires; who bestows this courage? Of what have I been thinking? Of what am I afraid? What is it? I desire to serve this my Lord; I aim at nothing else but his pleasure; I seek no joy, no rest, no other good than that of doing his will." I was so confident that I had no other desire, that I could safely assert it.[2]

Seeing, then, that our Lord is so powerful—as I see and know he is—and that the evil spirits are his slaves, of which there can be no doubt, because it is faith, and I a servant of this our Lord and King, what harm can Satan do me? Why have I not strength enough to fight against all hell? I took up the cross in my hand; I was changed in a moment into another person, and it seemed as if God had really given me courage enough not to be afraid of encountering all the evil spirits. It seemed to me that I could, with the cross, easily defeat them altogether. So I cried out: "Come

[1] Matt. viii 26. [2] Ch. xxv.

on, all of you : I am the servant of our Lord. I should like to see what you can do against me."

And certainly they seemed to be afraid of me, for I was left in peace : I feared them so little that the terrors, which until now oppressed me, quitted me altogether ; and though I saw them occasionally, I was never again afraid of them ; on the contrary, they seemed to be afraid of me. I found myself endowed with a certain authority over them, given me by the Lord of all, so that I cared no more for them than for flies. They seem to be such cowards ; for their strength fails them at the sight of anyone who despises them. These enemies have not the courage to assail any but those whom they see ready to give in to them, or when God permits them to do so, for the greater good of his servants, whom they may try and torment.

May His Majesty give me grace to take that for peace which is really peace, that for honour which is really honour, and that for delight which is really a delight. Let me never mistake one thing for another, and then I snap my fingers at all the devils, for they will be afraid of me. I do not understand those terrors which make us cry out : " Satan, Satan ! " when we may say : " God, God ! " and make Satan tremble. Do we not know that he cannot stir without the permission of God ? What does it mean ?

Third Point

O my Lord ! how thou dost show thy power ! There is no need to seek reasons for thy will ; for with thee, against all natural reason, all things are possible : so that thou teachest clearly there is no need of anything but loving thee in earnest, and really giving up everything for thee, in order that thou, O my Lord ! might make everything easy. It is well said that thou feignest to make thy law difficult : I do not see it, nor do I feel that the way that leadeth unto thee is narrow. I see it as a royal road, and not a pathway ; a road upon which whosoever really enters, travels most securely. No mountain passes and cliffs are near it : these are the occasions of sin. I call that a pass, a dangerous pass and a narrow road, which

has on one side a deep hollow, into which one stumbles, and on the other a precipice, over which they who are careless fall, and are dashed to pieces. He who loves thee, O my God! travels safely by the open and royal road far away from the precipice: he has scarcely stumbled at all, when thou stretchest forth thy hand to save him. One fall—yea, many falls—if he does but love thee, and not the things of the world, are not enough to make him perish; he travels in the valley of humility.

I cannot understand what it is that makes men afraid of the way of perfection. May our Lord of his mercy make us see what a poor security we have in the midst of dangers so manifest, when we live like the rest of the world; and that true security consists in striving to advance in the way of God! Let us fix our eyes upon him, and have no fear that the Sun of Justice will ever set or suffer us to travel to our ruin by night, unless we first look away from him.[1]

Colloquy

O my soul's Lord! who can find words to describe what thou givest to those who trust in thee and what they lose who dwell in themselves? Oh! let not this be so, O my Lord! Oh, how true a Friend art thou! how powerful! Thou showest thy power when thou wilt; and thou dost will it always, if only we will it also. Let the whole creation praise thee, O thou Lord of the world! Oh! that a voice might go forth over all the earth, proclaiming thy faithfulness to those who love thee! All things fail, but thou, Lord of all, never failest! They who love thee, oh, how little they have to suffer! oh, how gently, how tenderly, how sweetly, thou, O my Lord, dealest with them! Indeed, thou givest in abundance to all who truly trust in thee.

Resolution

If you occasionally lapse into sin, do not lose heart and cease trying to advance, for God will draw good even out of our falls.[2]

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxv. [2] *Interior Castle*, IInd Mansion, ch. i.

READING

St Teresa's Trust in God

She relates how, in the beginning of her spiritual life, our Lord was pleased to strengthen her confidence by the following vision:

"I was in prayer, and saw myself on a wide plain all alone. Round about me stood a great multitude of all kinds of people, who hemmed me in on every side; all of them seemed to have weapons of war in their hands to hurt me; some had spears, others swords; some had daggers, and others very long rapiers. In short, I could not move away in any direction without exposing myself to the hazard of death, and I was alone, without anyone to take my part. In this distress of mind, not knowing what to do, I lifted up my eyes to heaven, and saw Christ, not in heaven, but high above me in the air, holding out his hand to me, and there protecting me in such a way that I was no longer afraid of all that multitude, neither could they, though they wished it, do me any harm.

"At first the vision seemed to have no results; but it has been of the greatest help to me, since I understood what it meant. Not long afterwards, I saw myself, as it were, exposed to the like assault, and I saw that the vision represented the world, because everything in it takes up arms against the poor soul. We need not speak of those who are not great servants of our Lord, nor of honours, possessions, and pleasures, with other things of the same nature; for it is clear that the soul, if it be not watchful, will find itself caught in a net—at least, all these things labour to ensnare it; and more than this, so do friends and relatives, and—what frightens me most—even good people. I found myself afterwards so beset on all sides, good people thinking they were doing good, and I knowing not how to defend myself, nor what to do.

"O my God! if I were to say in what way, and in how many ways, I was tried at that time, even after that trial of which I have just spoken, what a warning I should be giving

to men to hate the whole world utterly! It was the greatest of all the persecutions I had to undergo. I saw myself so hemmed in on every side, that I could do nothing but lift up my eyes to heaven, and cry unto God. I recollected well what I had seen in the vision, and it helped me greatly not to trust much in anyone, for there is no one that can be relied on except God. In all my great trials, our Lord—he showed it to me—always sent someone on his part to hold out his hand to help me, as it was shown to me in the vision, so that I might attach myself to nothing, but only try to please our Lord; and this has been enough to sustain the little virtue I have in desiring to serve thee: be thou blessed for evermore." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxix.)

The Venerable Mother Ann of Jesus declared: "We have seen our Mother undertake very great things with such extraordinary confidence, that we were sometimes amazed at her being so certain of their success when all human support was wanting. We occasionally said to her: 'Mother, it cannot possibly be done.' She replied: 'Oh, if you could only trust in God! If you could only understand how he favours, by ways the least expected, things which concern his service.'

"Indeed, either in her foundations, or in other difficult matters, she succeeded in what she had undertaken. The Bishop of Avila, our first superior in that city, sometimes remarked to us: 'Truly I do not understand the Mother, but I trust her, for whatever she undertakes she carries out.' When anything appeared impossible, he used to inquire whether we had heard the Mother say it would take place. If we answered in the affirmative he would reply: 'I consider it done.' There are numerous proofs of this as regards the foundations or persons ill-disposed, who were wonderfully reconciled by intercourse with her. When her superiors were displeased with her, on account of accusations made against her, if any of us expressed any anxiety on the subject, she would say: 'I trust in the mercy of God that they will be appeased and will help us in every way.' These words would be fulfilled regarding the very points about which there were difficulties." *(Process of Avila.)*

She used to declare that to make a foundation she needed

nothing but a hired house and a hand-bell. She was heard to say: "Teresa and a ducat are nothing; but Teresa, a ducat and God are everything."

"Owing to this unshakable confidence in God," Father Ribera said, "she obtained all that she wished for and performed great deeds. The opposition of the powerful, and the most complicated business never affected her courage. She cheered herself and others, saying: 'The whole world is incapable of undoing what God does, and of hindering us from carrying out an undertaking that we are aware God wills us to execute." (Book iv, ch. xiv.)

"She said to me at Salamanca," wrote the same Father Ribera: 'Jesus Christ is the King I ought to serve. His holy will being once known, nothing in the world can prevent my fulfilling it.'" (*Book* ii, ch. xviii.)

THIRD MEDITATION

UNION WITH GOD THROUGH CONFORMITY WITH HIS WILL

PRELUDE.—One day I heard these words: "During this life true gain consists not in striving after greater joy in me, but in doing my will."[1]

FIRST POINT

We belong to God, Christians; let him do what he will with us, and lead us where he will.[2] We should abandon our souls into the hands of God, leaving him to do as he chooses with us, as far as possible forgetting all self-interest and resigning ourselves entirely to his will.[3] We render God the most true and acceptable service by caring only for his honour and glory and forgetting ourselves, our advantages, comfort and happiness. What a gain is ours, if, for fear of losing by it, we do not seek to gain by what we think is best, since God never permits the truly mortified soul to lose aught, save for its greater gain![4]

The chief point is that we should resolutely give him our heart for his own, and should empty it of everything else, that he may take out, or put in, whatever he pleases, as if it were his own property.[5] This is the condition he makes, and he is right in doing so. He does not force our will, he only takes what we give him, but he does not give himself entirely until he sees that we yield ourselves entirely to him.

What power, Christians, lies in this gift of the will![6] Made with full determination, it is able to draw the Almighty to become one with our baseness and to transform us into himself, thus uniting the creature with its Creator. The

[1] *Relations*, iii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. ii.
[3] Ch. iii.
[4] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xvii.
[5] Ch. xxviii.
[6] Ch. xxii.

fervent wish of such souls for the fulfilment of God's will in them makes them acquiesce in all he does.[1] Then, the soul is pleased with all that comes, because it desires nothing but what God wills.[2]

Second Point

With the help of divine grace, true union can always be attained, by forcing ourselves to renounce our own will and by following the will of God in all things.[3] Oh, how many of us affirm that we do this, and believe we seek nothing else—indeed, we would die for the truth of what we say! If this be the case, I can only declare, as I fancy I did before, and shall again and again, that we have already obtained this grace from God. There is, then, no need to wish for that other delightful union, for its chief value lies in the resignation of our will to that of God, without which it could not be reached. Oh, how desirable is this union! The happy soul which has attained it will live in this world and in the next without care of any sort. No earthly events can trouble it, unless it should see itself in danger of losing God or should witness any offence offered him. Neither sickness, poverty, nor the loss of anyone by death affect it, except it be that of persons useful to the Church of God, for the soul realizes thoroughly that God's disposal is wiser than its own desires.

Be certain, faithful souls, that in this consists all the greatest perfection to be attained in the spiritual life.[4] She who practises this most perfectly will receive from God the highest reward and be the farthest advanced on the right road. Do not imagine that we have need of a cabalistic formula or any other occult or mysterious thing to attain it—our whole welfare consists in doing the will of God.

This is the union I have longed for all my life and that I beg our Lord to grant me; it is the most certain and the safest. But, alas! how few of us ever obtain it![5]

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch iii.
[2] IInd Mansion.
[3] Vth Mansion, ch. iii.
[4] IInd Mansion.
[5] Vth Mansion, ch. iii.

Third Point

This does not mean that we must so submit to the will of God as not to sorrow at such troubles as the death of a father or brother, or that we must bear crosses and sickness with joy. This is well, but it sometimes comes from common-sense, which, as we cannot help ourselves, makes a virtue of necessity. How often the great wisdom of the heathen philosophers led them to act thus in trials of this kind!

You must know that there are different kinds of sorrow: there are both griefs and joys rising from an impulse of nature or from charity which makes us pity our neighbour, like that felt by our Saviour when he raised Lazarus from the dead. These feelings do not destroy union with the will of God, nor do they disturb the soul by a restless, turbulent and lasting passion. They soon pass away, for they do not affect the depths of the soul, but only its senses and faculties.

Now, I ask, what canst thou do, O my Lord, that is not for the greater good of that soul which thou knowest to be already thine, and which gives itself up to thee to follow thee whithersoever thou goest, even to the death of the Cross, and which is determined to help thee to carry that Cross, and not to leave thee alone with it?[1]

Inevitably the will of God must be done; whether we wish it or no, it will prevail both in heaven and earth. Then, take my advice; trust what I say, and make a virtue of necessity.[2]

O my God, well is it for me that thou didst not leave such a wretch as myself at liberty to fulfil or to frustrate thy will! What should I have done, had it depended upon me whether thy will should be done in heaven and on earth? Yet, although it is not purged from all self-seeking, freely do I yield my will to thee, for experience has taught me what I gain by resigning my own will to thine. Mayest thou be blessed for ever and may all creation praise thee! May thy name be glorified for evermore.

[1] *Life*, ch. xi. [2] *Way of Perfection*, xxxii.

Colloquy

O my God, my infinite Wisdom, without measure and without bounds, above the understanding either of angels or men; Love, who dost love me more than I can love myself, or can conceive: why do I wish for more than thou dost will to give me? Why weary myself by praying for what I desire to thee, who knowest what would be the result of all my thoughts imagine or my heart craves for, while I am ignorant of what would profit me?[1]

Perhaps what my soul fancies would be its gain might be its ruin. If I ask thee to free me from a cross by which thou seekest to mortify me, what do I ask thee, my God?

If I entreat thee to send me such a trial, perhaps it may be beyond my patience, which is too weak to bear so heavy a burden; or, were I to endure it, but were wanting in humility, I might fancy I had performed some great deed while thou, my God, didst do it all. When I seek for greater sufferings, I do not wish for what might injure my good name, which seems requisite for serving thee, though I believe that I care for nothing but for thy honour; yet perhaps the very means I think would hinder me might further my one desire of labouring for thee. I could say far more, O Lord, to show how little I know myself, but as thou surely knowest this, why do I speak of it?

In order that, when misery again overwhelms me, my God, and reason is blinded, I may find it written here. Often, my God, when I feel most wretched, weak and cowardly, do I try to recall her, who, called herself thy servant, who thought the grace she received from thee would suffice to arm her against all the tempests of this world.

No, my God, no! Let me no longer trust to my own wishes: will for me as thou art pleased to will, for this is my will, since all my good consists in pleasing thee.

Resolution

O my soul, submit to the will of thy God! This is best for thee.[2]

[1] *Exclamations*, xvi. [2] *Exclamations*, vi.

READING

ST TERESA'S CONFORMITY WITH THE WILL OF GOD

About the foundation of St Joseph at Avila she relates : " The inhabitants were so excited, that they talked of nothing else ; everyone condemned me, and hurried to the Provincial and to my monastery.

" I was no more distressed by what they said of me than if they had said nothing ; but I was afraid the monastery would be destroyed : that was painful ; so also was it to see those persons who helped me lose their credit and suffer so much annoyance. But as to what was said of myself, I was rather glad, and if I had had any faith, I should not have been troubled at all ; but a slight failing in one virtue is enough to put all the others to sleep. I was, therefore, extremely distressed during the two days on which those assemblies of which I have spoken were held. In the extremity of my trouble, our Lord said to me : *Knowest thou not that I am the Almighty ? What art thou afraid of ?* He made me feel assured that the monastery would not be broken up, and I was exceedingly comforted. The informations taken were sent up to the king's council, and an order came back for a report on the whole matter.

" This was the beginning of a great lawsuit : the city sent delegates to the court, and some must be sent also to defend the monastery : but I had no money, nor did I know what to do. Our Lord provided for us ; for the Father Provincial never ordered me not to meddle in the matter. He is so great a lover of all that is good, that though he did not help us, he would not be against our work. Neither did he authorize me to enter the house till he saw how it would end. Those servants of God who were in it were left alone, and did more by their prayers than I did with all my negotiations, though the affair needed the utmost attention. Now and then everything seemed to fail ; particularly one day, before the Provincial came, when the prioress ordered me to meddle no more with it, and to give it up altogether. I betook myself to God, and said : ' O Lord, this house is not mine ; it was founded for thee ; and now that there is no one to take up the cause, do thou protect it.' I now felt myself in peace, and as free from anxiety as if the whole world

were on my side in the matter, and at once I looked upon it as safe." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxvi.)

Such were the dispositions of Teresa at the beginning of the career of perfection. Later on, her will became entirely one with the will of her Master. A sister one day having asked of her if she did not feel violent desires for Communion as since a month the fracture of an arm had deprived her of it, she replied that it was not so, and that, considering that God so wished it, her soul found itself in the same state as if she had communicated every day.

One year before her death, she could write:

"Though my desires are great, I have one much greater: to see the will of God accomplished and his glory increased; for as the soul is well aware that His Majesty knows what is expedient herein, and is so far removed from all self-seeking, these acts and desires quickly end, and, as it seems to me, have no strength.

"My will never swerves—even in its first movements—from the will of God. This resignation to his will is so efficacious that I desire neither life nor death, except for a few moments when I long to see God; and then the presence of the three Persons becomes so distinct as to relieve the pain of absence, and I wish to live—if such be his good pleasure—to serve him still longer. And if I might help, by my prayers, to make but one soul love him, and praise him more, and that only for a short time, I think that of greater importance than to dwell in glory.

"In truth, my soul is in some measure no longer subject as before to the miseries of this world; though it suffers more, it seems as if only the outer part were affected; it dwells, as it were, in a fortress ruling with authority, and accordingly does not lose its peace. Still, this confidence does not remove its great fear of offending God, nor make it less careful to avoid every hindrance to his service; rather, it is more careful than before. But it is so forgetful of its own interests as to seem, in some measure, to have lost itself, so forgetful of self is it in this. Everything is directed to the honour of God, to the doing of his will more and more, and the advancement of his glory." (*Letter to Don Alphonsus Velasquez, Bishop of Osma, May, 1581.*)

FOURTH MEDITATION

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

PRELUDE.—Our Lord said to me one day: "Believe me, my daughter, his trials are the heaviest whom my Father loves best; trials are the measure of his love. How can I show my love for thee better than by desiring for thee what I desired for myself?" [1]

FIRST POINT

Do you know what it is to be truly spiritual?[2] It is for men to make themselves the slaves of God, branded with his mark, which is the cross. Since they have given him their freedom, he can sell them as slaves to the whole world, as he was, which would be doing them no wrong, but the greatest favour. His Majesty can bestow no greater favour on us than to give us a life such as was led by his beloved Son. Therefore, as I have often told, I feel certain that the signal graces are sent to strengthen our weakness, that we may imitate him by suffering much.

We always find that those nearest to Christ our Lord bear the heaviest cross: think of what his glorious Mother and the Apostles bore. How do you think St Paul went through such immense labours? We learn from his conduct the fruits of genuine visions and contemplation which come from our Lord and not from our own imaginations, or the devil's fraud. Do you suppose that St Paul hid himself to enjoy these spiritual consolations at leisure and did nothing else? You know that he never took a day's rest, as far as we can learn, nor could he have slept much, since he worked all night to get his living.

I am delighted with St Peter, who, when fleeing from prison, was met by our Lord, who told him he was going to Rome to be crucified again. I never recite the Office in

[1] *Relations*, iii. [2] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iv.

which this is commemorated without feeling a special joy. What effect did this vision have on St Peter, and what did he do? He went at once to meet his death.

Second Point

As for myself, I would always choose the way of suffering, were it only for the sake of imitating our Lord Jesus Christ; though, in fact, it profits us in many other manners.[1] Oh, what a blessing it is when our Lord gives light to understand how great is the grace of suffering for him![2] This is never understood till we have left all things; for if anybody is attached to any one thing, that is a proof that he sets some value upon it; and if he sets any value upon it, it is painful to be compelled to give it up. In that case, everything is imperfect and lost. And what greater loss, what greater blindness, what greater calamity, can there be than making much of that which is nothing?

You must know that the souls who have learnt the worth of all created things do not pay much heed to any transitory matter; if, for a moment, some serious injury or suffering affects them, yet they have hardly felt it before reason comes to their aid and, as it were, erects the standard of faith for them, and overthrows their pain by the joy of seeing that God has given them an opportunity of gaining, in one day, more graces and lasting rewards than they could have earned for themselves in ten years by any self-sought labours undertaken for him. From what I have been told by many contemplatives, I believe this is very usual: they prize afflictions as other people prize gold and jewels, knowing that sorrows will make them rich.[3]

Such souls do not care whether they are highly esteemed or no. I am wrong in saying that "they do not care," for honour troubles them far more than contempt, and they dislike rest much more than toil. When God has really given his kingdom to a person, she no longer wishes for any

[1] vith Mansion, ch. i.
[2] *Life*, ch. xxxiv.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxvi.

kingdom in this world : she understands that this is the way to reign in a far higher manner, experience having taught her what benefit accrues from it and that the soul makes rapid progress through suffering for God.

Third Point

It is evident that the life of our Lord was one continual torment ; so would he have ours to be, at least in desire ; for as to the rest, he leads us mercifully as our weakness requires, though when he sees the need, he imparts to us his strength.[1] Thus in very grievous trials, persecutions and contradictions, God gave me great courage ; and the more grievous they were, the greater the courage, without weariness in suffering.[2]

I know for a certain truth, being acquainted with some who walk by the way of love (and therefore only seek to serve Jesus Christ crucified), that not only they neither ask for nor desire consolation, but they even beg him not to give it them during this life ; this is a fact. Such souls hold that their glory consists in helping, in any way, him who was crucified, especially as they see how men offend him, and how few, detached from all else, care for his honour alone.[3]

To tell the truth, I believe I have never known real pain since I resolved to serve my Lord and my Consoler with all my strength ; for though he would leave me to suffer a little, yet he would console me in such a way that I am doing nothing when I long for troubles. And it seems to me there is nothing worth living for but this, and suffering is what I most heartily pray for to God. I say to him sometimes, with my whole heart : " O Lord, either to die or suffer ! I ask of thee nothing else for myself."[4]

[1] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iii.
[2] *Spiritual Relation*, iii.
[3] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iii.
[4] *Life*, ch. xv.

Colloquy

In every way and in every matter, do thy will in me, O Lord, as thou pleasest.[1] If thou desirest to give me crosses, grant me strength, and let them come; if thou wouldst send me persecutions, shame, poverty, illness, I stand ready, nor will I turn away from them, O my Father![2] Make me die to self; let Another, greater, and better for me than myself, live in me, that I may serve him; let him live and give me life: let him reign that I may be his slave; my soul seeks no other liberty, for how can he be free who is separated from the Most High? What more abject or miserable serf than the soul which has broken loose from the hands of its Creator?

Happy the souls imprisoned by the fetters and chains of God's gifts and mercy, and too strongly bound and helpless to free themselves. Love is strong as death and hard as hell.

Oh, that we were but slain by this love, and plunged in this divine hell, from whence, ah! from whence there is no hope of escape, or rather no fear of being cast forth.

Resolution

In our troubles, let us consider what our Lord suffered, and say: Life is short; we have but a moment more to suffer.[3]

READING

Last Sufferings and Holy Death of the Saint

"God had made known to her the time of her death. One of her daughters having said to her, 'Your Reverence is now fifty-nine years old?' she answered, 'Yes,' and then added in a low voice, as if speaking to herself, 'From fifty-nine to sixty-eight.' Five years later, the physician having advised certain remedies, she said, 'For the four years I

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxii.
[2] *Exclamations*, xvi.
[3] Letter to Maria de Mendoza.

have to live, why take so much trouble?' She had predicted to the Duchess of Alba and to Father Mariano that she would die at Alba.

"Our Lord having assured her that all was well, and her presence no longer necessary at Burgos, she departed for Palencia, where she had a monastery, and from thence went to Medina del Campo, with the intention of going later to Avila to give the veil to her niece Teresa. But Father Antony of Jesus, then Vicar Provincial, urged her to go to Alba, where the Duchess desired her presence. She made a great sacrifice in complying with the request of the Vicar, for it seemed to her more useful to go to Avila, but obedience guiding her in all, she entered the carriage with Sister Ann of St Bartholomew, her usual travelling companion, whom the Church has declared Blessed on account of her many virtues.

"It was on September 19 that the Mother was seized with a flow of blood—the illness from which she died—so severe that on reaching a little village called Penaranda, which is half-way on the Alba road, succumbing entirely to the fatigue of the journey and the weakness, she fainted away. The village was so wretched that it was impossible to procure any comfort or relief for her. In vain did Sister Ann endeavour to find at least an egg; it was impossible to find anything whatever, except some figs, which the weeping and heart-broken sister gave her. The Saint attempted to taste them, and, to console her, said. 'Do not weep for me, my daughter; these figs are very good, and many of the poor have not so much. It is God who permits all this.' The following day, at a small neighbouring village, it was necessary to content themselves with a little stew of herbs flavoured with onions. Hence they say in Spain: 'It was the people of Penaranda who killed the Saint.'

"Teresa arrived at Alba in the evening, in such a feeble state that they could not think of taking her to the castle. She entered the monastery, never again to leave it alive. The sisters all implored her to go at once to bed, which she consented to do, saying: 'God help me! I feel utterly broken down; it was more than twenty years ago since I went to bed so early.' She rose, however, the following day, and assisted at the exercises of the Community; but on the 29th, after

hearing Mass and receiving Communion, she found herself unable to rise from her bed. In vain her daughters redoubled their care and the Duchess of Alba wished to be her sick nurse, the illness continued to increase.

"To Father Antony of Jesus, who told her to implore God to leave her some time longer on earth, she replied: 'I am no longer necessary in this world'; and to Sister Ann of St Bartholomew she said: 'My daughter, the hour of my death is at hand.' They all then understood that the hour of the final separation was near.

"On October 2, her condition became very alarming, and at three o'clock in the afternoon she asked for the last Sacraments. While they prepared the necessary things, her daughters pressed about her, trying to catch her last words and to receive her last wishes and instructions. She said to them: 'My daughters and my ladies, preserve faithfully your Constitutions and your Rules; obey your superiors and forget, I entreat you, the many bad examples set you by the faithless nun who is now speaking.' Their sobs and tears were their only answer.

"When she saw the Well-Beloved of her heart enter her poor cell, she who for four entire days had only been able to change her place in bed by the help of two sisters, lifted herself quickly and would even have left her bed to welcome the Host had she been allowed. Then, in a feeble voice, but clear and penetrating, she cried: 'O my Saviour and my Spouse, behold it is now come, the hour so long expected; it is time to go forth from this exile and to behold thee! My tender Master, here is the moment of parting, for which I bless thee a thousand times. It is just that my soul should rejoice in this which it has so ardently desired.' Then, thinking of her sins, she said: 'Lord, thou wilt not despise a broken and contrite heart, thou wilt not turn away thy face from me. Create in me a pure heart.' Afterward, thinking of all the evils with which the Church is afflicted, she said: 'At least, I am a daughter of the Church!'

"At nine o'clock she received Extreme Unction. Father Antony of Jesus having inquired if she wished her body to be laid at Alba, she answered: 'Have I anything which belongs to me? Is there no corner here in which I can be buried?'

"The next day, which was October 4, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, she lay on her left side and ceased to speak, holding in her hand a crucifix which she kept to the end; she seemed to pray, as in a sort of ecstatic trance. Sister Ann of St Bartholomew, between whom and the Saint there was a close bond of friendship, watched close beside her; she had been the daily companion of the Saint, and bestowed on her those cares which her infirmities demanded.

"We will let her speak herself for a moment: 'I was wounded to the very quick when she told me at Alba that she was certain to die of the disease which had fastened upon her. Until her death I never left her for one moment, except when sent by Father Antony, one of the earliest of the Reformed Carmelities, to get something to eat. She immediately had me called back to her. When I returned and stood by her side, she had lost all power of speech, but she looked at me with a smile and gave me a thousand tender caresses; and taking me with both her hands, she threw my two arms about her head. I held her thus for fourteen hours. She lay in so ecstatic a state, that it seemed she deferred dying. My grief was extreme, but I saw suddenly and continued to see for the whole space of a *Credo* our Lord Jesus Christ who stood beside her and prepared to lead away his chosen servant. This vision gave me resignation. I said to God that even were he willing to preserve my good Mother on earth, I would beg him now not to do so even for an instant. Scarcely had I said these words, when she softly and instantly expired.'

"At that moment one of the nuns present saw a white dove fly from her mouth and rise toward the heavens. Another, known for her holiness, heard the coming of a great multitude, and saw many beings clad with radiance enter, and surround the couch of the Mother, coming to conduct her into Paradise. The face of the Saint became dazzling with beauty, and the wrinkles which had been visible were effaced: her skin was like the lily, and her cheeks glowed with the carnation which the fervour of prayer had formerly caused to glow in her countenance. Her daughters could not cease from contemplating her, from kissing her feet and hands. One of them who suffered cruelly from her head and her

eyes was immediately cured by placing the hand of the Saint upon the afflicted parts. Her limbs were perfectly flexible; the holy body gave forth a celestial odour, so soft and penetrating that it spread through all the house: everything was impregnated, the walls of the cell, the garments, every object which had been within reach. This peculiarity has already been remarked during her life. A little boy whom the mother had blessed said: 'How good the hands of that Saint smell!'

"The holy Mother appeared to several people, acquainting them with the glory she rejoiced in, consoling her daughters in different places for the grief occasioned by the news of her death. A hazel-nut tree just opposite her cell, which had been long dead, suddenly sprang into rich flower. It was on the very day of her death, October 4, 1582, that the calendar was reformed and for scientific reasons ten days were cut out, so that the day after Teresa's death, which was appointed for her funeral, was October 15, instead of October 5." (*Popular Life of St Teresa of Jesus*, by Annie Porter—St Teresa and death.)

SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATIONS

FIRST SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

RECOLLECTION

PRELUDE.—Can any evil be greater than that we find at home! What peace can we hope to find elsewhere, if we have none within us? What friends or kindred can be so close and intimate as the powers of our soul, which, whether we will or no, must ever bear us company? These seem to wage war on us as if they knew the harm our vices had wrought them.[1]

FIRST POINT

Let us realize that we have within us a most splendid palace, built entirely of gold and precious stones—in short, one that is fit for so great a Lord—and that we are partly responsible for the condition of this building, because there is no structure so beautiful as a soul filled with virtues, and the more perfect these virtues are the more brilliantly do the jewels shine.[2] Within this palace dwells the mighty King who has deigned to become your Father, and who is seated on a throne of priceless value—by which I mean your heart.

At the first glance you may think that such a simile to explain this truth is far-fetched, yet it may prove very useful to you, for we women are not learned, and must make use of every means in order to understand that we have within us an incomparably greater treasure than anything we can see around us.

Oh, if only I could describe how the soul holds intercourse with this Companion, the Holy of holies, with nothing to intrude on the solitude of itself and its Spouse, whenever it seeks to retire within itself with its God into this

[1] *Interior Castle*, IInd Mansion.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxviii.

"heaven," shutting the door against all the world. I say "the soul seeks," because you must understand that this is not a supernatural state, but something which, with the grace of God, we can desire and obtain for ourselves.

This is not what is called silence of the powers; it is a recollection of the powers within the soul itself. There are several ways of acquiring the habit. Many books advise us to cast aside all other thoughts in order to approach God, who dwells in our souls, and tells us, that even in the midst of our occupations, we should occasionally withdraw into ourselves, if only for a moment.

It is very helpful to read a book of devotion in the vulgar tongue, so as to learn how to collect the thoughts and to pray well vocally, thus little by little enticing the soul by coaxing and persuasion, so that it may not take alarm. You must be very prudent, for it has deserted its Lover many years ago, and needs very careful management to induce it to return to its home. We sinners have so accustomed ourselves and our thoughts to run after pleasure (or pain, as it might more fitly be called), that the poor soul no longer understands itself, and needs many stratagems to make it stay with its Bridegroom; yet unless we succeed in doing this, we shall accomplish nothing.

Second Point

Although only vocal, yet this kind of prayer rivets the thoughts much more quickly than any other kind, and has many advantages.[1] It is called "recollection" because by its means the soul collects together all its faculties, and enters within itself to be with God. The divine Master thus comes more speedily than he otherwise would to teach it and to grant it the prayer of quiet. For being retired within itself, the spirit can meditate on the Passion and can there picture in its thoughts the Son, and can offer him to the Father, without tiring the mind by journeying to find him on Mount Calvary, or in the garden or at the column.

[1] Ch. xxviii.

Those who are thus able to enclose themselves within the little heaven of their souls, where dwells the Creator of both heaven and earth, and who can accustom themselves not to look at anything nor to remain in any place which would preoccupy their exterior senses, may feel sure that they are travelling by an excellent way, and that they will certainly attain to drink of the water from the fountain, for they will journey far in a short time. They resemble a man who goes by sea, and who, if the weather is favourable, gets in a few days to the end of a voyage which would have taken far longer by land. These souls may be said to have already put out to sea, and though they have not quite lost sight of *terra firma*, still they do their best to get away from it by collecting their faculties.

If this recollection is genuine, it is easily discerned, for it produces a certain effect that I cannot describe, but which will be recognized by those who know it from personal experience. Like one who retires into a strong fortress to be out of danger, it withdraws the senses from outward things, so strongly despising them that involuntarily the eyes close so as to veil from sight what is visible, in order that the eyes of the soul may see more clearly. Those who practise this prayer almost always keep their eyes shut during it. This is an excellent custom for many reasons, because one thus forcibly prevents oneself from looking at earthly things. This restraint is only required when one first begins to practise this prayer : later on a strong effort would be needed to open the eyes. The soul appears to gather strength and to dominate itself at the expense of the body, which it leaves lonely and enfeebled, and thereby gains a stronger empire over it.

At first these signs are not apparent, as the recollection, which may be more or less, is not very great. In the beginning it needs a painful effort, for the body claims its rights, not understanding that its rebellion is suicidal. Yet by persevering in the habit for several days, and by controlling ourselves, the benefits that result will be clear.

Third Point

We shall find that when we begin to pray, the bees will

return to the hive and enter it to make the honey without any effort on our part, for our Lord is pleased to reward the soul and the will by this empire over the powers, in return for the time spent in restraining them.[1] Thus the mind only requires to make them a sign that it wishes to be recollected, and the senses will immediately obey it and retire within themselves. Although afterwards they may wander again, still it is a great thing to have conquered them, for they go forth as captives and servants, and cannot do the mischief they did before. When the will recalls them they return more quickly, until after they have re-entered a number of times, our Lord is pleased that they should enter entirely in perfect contemplation.

Pay great attention to what I have said, for though it may seem obscure, yet anyone who practises it will understand it.

To conclude, I advise whoever wishes to acquire this habit (which, as I said, we have the power to gain) not to grow tired of persevering in trying gradually to gain the mastery over herself. This self-denial will profit any nun by making her senses serve her soul. If she wishes to talk, let her know that there is One within her to whom she can speak: if she prefers to listen, let her realize that she can hearken to him who is nearer to her than all others. In short, let her be convinced that she may, if she likes, ever keep this holy companionship. Let her grieve when, for any length of time, she has deserted the Father, of whom she has such need.

The habit of recollection is not to be gained by force of arms, but with calmness, which will enable you to practise it for a longer space of time. I will say no more now, except that I think it very helpful for those of you who are beginners to consult persons experienced in these matters, lest you should imagine that you are injuring yourselves by leaving your prayer to perform any necessary duties. This is not the case; our Lord will direct such things to our profit, although we may have no one to counsel us. The only remedy for having given up a habit of recollection is to recommence it, otherwise the soul will continue to lose it

[1] Ch. xxix.

more and more every day, and God grant it may realize its danger.

Colloquy

O Lord God, my eternal Father! I have no need to go to heaven to enjoy thy company, nor is it requisite to raise the voice to address thee, for thou hearest every whisper, however low.[1] We are not forced to take wings to find thee, but have only to seek solitude and to look within ourselves. I need not be overwhelmed with confusion before so kind a Guest, but, with utter humility, I can talk to thee as to my Father, ask for what I want as from a father, tell thee my sorrows and beg thee for relief, realizing, at the same time, that I am unworthy to be called thy daughter.

Resolution

Let us perform all our actions as if we saw God present; it greatly helps the soul.[2]

READING

How St Teresa began to practise Recollection

"An uncle whose house was on our way to Becedas," she writes, "gave me a book called *Tercer Abecedario,* which treats of the prayer of recollection. Though in the first year I had read good books—for I would read no others, because I understood now the harm they had done me—I did not know how to make my prayer, nor how to recollect myself. I was therefore much pleased with the book, and resolved to follow the way of prayer it described with all my might. And as our Lord had already bestowed upon me the gift of tears, and I found pleasure in reading, I began to spend a certain time in solitude, to go frequently to Confession, and make a beginning of that way of prayer, with

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxviii. [2] *Maxims*.

this book for my guide; for I had no master—I mean, no confessor—who understood me, though I sought for such a one for twenty years afterwards: which did me much harm, in that I frequently went backwards, and might have been even utterly lost, for, anyhow, a director would have helped me to escape the risks I ran of sinning against God.

"From the very beginning, God was most gracious unto me. Though I was not so free from sin as the book required, I passed that by; such watchfulness seemed to me almost impossible. I was on my guard against mortal sin—and would to God I had always been so!—but I was careless about venial sins, and that was my ruin. Yet for all this, at the end of my stay there—I spent nearly nine months in the practice of solitude—our Lord began to comfort me so much in these ways of prayer, as in his mercy to raise me to the prayer of quiet, and now and then to that of union, though I understood not what either the one or the other was, nor the great esteem I ought to have had of them. I believe it would have been a great blessing to me if I had understood the matter. It is true that the prayer of union lasted but a short time: I know not if it continued for the space of an *Ave Maria*; but the fruits of it remained; and they were such that, though I was then not twenty years of age, I seemed to despise the world utterly; and so I remember how sorry I was for those who followed its way, though only in things lawful.

"I used to labour with all my might to imagine Jesus Christ, our God and our Lord, present within me. And this was the way I prayed. If I meditated on any mystery of his life, I represented it to myself as within me, though the greater part of my time I spent in reading good books, which was all my comfort; for God never endowed me with the gift of making reflections with the understanding, or with that of using the imagination to any good purpose: my imagination is so sluggish, that even if I would think of, or picture to myself, as I used to labour to picture, our Lord's humanity, I never could do it.

"During all this time, it was only after Communion that I ever ventured to begin my prayer without a book—my soul was as much afraid to pray without one, as if it had to fight

against a host. With a book to help me—it was like a companion, and a shield whereon to receive the blows of many thoughts—I found comfort; for it was not usual with me to be in aridity: but I always was so when I had no book; for my soul was disturbed, and my thoughts wandered at once. With one I began to collect my thoughts, and, using it as a decoy, kept my soul in peace, very frequently by merely opening a book—there was no necessity for more. Sometimes I read but little; at other times, much—according as our Lord had pity on me.

"I have often thought with wonder of the great goodness of God; and my soul has rejoiced in the contemplation of his great magnificence and mercy. May he be blessed for ever!—for I see clearly that he has not omitted to reward me, even in this life, for every one of my good desires." (*Life written by herself*, ch. iv.)

SECOND SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

WANDERING THOUGHTS

PRELUDE.—One day, at Communion, I was so dissipated and distracted in mind, that I had no power over it, and began to envy those who dwell in desert places, thinking that, as they see and hear nothing, they are exempt from distractions.[1] I heard this: "Thou art greatly deceived, my daughter; on the contrary, the temptations of Satan are more violent there. Have patience; while life lasts, it cannot be helped."

FIRST POINT

Do not imagine that if your thoughts wander a little, all is lost.[2] I, myself, have sometimes been troubled by this turmoil of thoughts. I learnt by experience, but little more than four years ago,[3] that our thoughts—or it is clearer to call it our imagination—are not the same thing as the understanding. I questioned a theologian on the subject; he told me it was the fact, which consoled me not a little. As the understanding is one of the powers of the soul, it puzzled me to see it so sluggish at times, while, as a rule, the imagination takes flight at once, so that God alone can control it by so uniting us to himself that we seem, in a manner, detached from our bodies. It puzzled me to see that while, to all appearance, the powers of the soul were occupied with God and recollected in him, the imagination was wandering elsewhere.

This causes the sufferings felt by many people, particularly by the unlearned, who practise prayer. They complain of interior trials, become melancholy, lose their health, and even give up prayer altogether for want of recognizing that we have within ourselves, as it were, an interior world. We cannot stop the revolution of the heavens as they rush with velocity upon their course, neither can we control our

[1] *Relations*, iii. [2] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. i.
[3] St Teresa wrote these lines six years before she died.

imagination. When this wanders, we at once imagine that all the powers of the soul follow it; we think everything is lost, and that the time spent in God's presence is wasted. Meanwhile, the soul is perhaps entirely united to him, while the imagination is struggling outside and gaining merits by its warfare. Therefore, we need not let ourselves be disturbed, nor give up prayer, as the devil is striving to persuade us. As a rule, all our anxieties and troubles come from misunderstanding our nature.

While writing this I am thinking of the loud noise in my head which has made it almost impossible to obey the command given me to write this. It sounds as if there were a number of rushing waterfalls within my brain, while in other parts, drowned by the sound of the waters, are the voices of birds singing and whistling. This tumult is not in my ears, but in the upper part of my head. It may be that God has sent this suffering in my head to help me to understand the matter, for all this tumult in my brain does not interfere with my prayer, nor with my speaking to you, but the great calm and love and desires in my soul remain undisturbed and my mind is clear.

Second Point

We should not be distressed by reason of our thoughts, nor allow ourselves to be worried by them. Everybody, I think, is not so violently distressed and assaulted by these weaknesses as I have been for many years on account of my wickedness, so that it seems as if I strove to take vengeance on myself. Since I suffer so much in this way, perhaps others may do the same, so I shall continue to explain the subject in different ways, in order to find some means of making it clear. The thing is inevitable; therefore do not let it disturb or grieve you, but let the mill clack on while we grind our wheat; that is, let us continue to work with our will and intellect.

This comes most frequently from bodily indisposition—I have had very great experience in the matter, and I know it is true; for I have carefully observed it and discussed it

afterwards with spiritual persons—for we are so wretched, that this poor prisoner of a soul shares in the miseries of the body.[1] The changes of the seasons, and the alterations of the humours, very often compel it, without fault of its own, not to do what it would, but rather to suffer in every way. Meanwhile, the more we force the soul on these occasions, the greater the mischief, and the longer it lasts. Some discretion must be used in order to ascertain whether ill-health be the occasion or not. The poor soul must not be stifled. Let those who thus suffer understand that they are ill; a change should be made in the hour of prayer, and often that change should be continued for some days. Let souls pass out of this desert as they can, for it is very often the misery of one that loves God to see itself living in such wretchedness, unable to do what it would, because it has to keep so evil a guest as the body.

Third Point

Sometimes God permits a tempest of difficulties to assault his servants for their greater good; then, though the soul may grieve at its distractions and try to stop them, this is found to be impossible.[2] Such a person cannot attend to what she is saying, strive as she may, nor can she fix her thoughts on any other subject: indeed, she seems bereft of reason and her wits wander—still the pain this state causes her proves her to be blameless in the matter. She should not trouble herself about it; this would only increase the evil: let her not tire herself by trying to reduce her mind to reason, of which, in such a state, it is incapable.[3] Let her pray as best she can, or leave off praying and rest her brain as if she were ill, occupying herself with some other good work. This advice applies to persons who watch carefully over themselves and who grasp the truth that they cannot speak both to God and to the world at the same time.

I spoke of discretion, because sometimes the devil will do the same work, and so it is not always right to omit prayer

[1] *Life*, ch. xi.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxiv.
[3] *Life*, ch. xi.

when the understanding is greatly distracted and disturbed, nor to torment the soul to the doing of that which is out of her power. There are other things then to be done—exterior works, as of charity and spiritual reading—though at times the soul will not be able to do them. Take care, then, of the body, for the love of God, because at any other times the body must serve the soul; and let recourse be had to some recreations—holy ones—such as conversation, or going out into the fields, as the confessor shall advise. Altogether, experience is a great matter, and it makes us understand what is convenient for us. Let God be served in all things—his yoke is sweet: and it is of great importance that the soul should not be dragged, as they say, but carried gently, that it may make greater progress.

Colloquy

Often do I think, O my Lord, that if aught can soothe a life apart from thee, it is solitude, wherein the soul rests with him who is its true repose.[1] Yet, unable as it is to enjoy thee with full liberty, its torment often redoubles. O my God! I think no earthly scorn or suffering can try us so severely as these struggles within our souls.[2] All uneasiness or conflict can be borne while we have peace in ourselves; but if, while seeking for rest amid the thousand trials of the world—knowing that thou hast prepared this rest for us—the obstacle is found in ourselves, the trial must needs prove painful and almost insufferable. Take us, therefore, O Lord, to where these miseries can no longer cause us to be despised, for sometimes it seems as if they mocked our souls.

Resolution

Let us be patient and suffer for the love of God.

READING

St Teresa's Numerous Distractions in Prayer. Some Other States of her Soul

"It happened to me to be tempted once in this way; and

[1] *Exclamations*, ii. [2] *Interior Castle*, ivth Mansion, ch. i.

I remember it was on the day before the vigil of Corpus Christi—a feast to which I have great devotion, though not so great as I ought to have. The trial lasted only till the day of the feast itself. But on other occasions it continued one, two, and even three weeks, and—I know not—perhaps longer. But I was specially liable to it during Holy Week, when it was my habit to make prayer my joy. Then the devil seizes on my understanding in a moment; and occasionally, by means of things so trivial that I should laugh at them at any other time, he makes it stumble over anything he likes. The soul, laid in fetters, loses all control over itself, and all power of thinking of anything but the absurdities he puts before it, which, being more or less unsubstantial, inconsistent, and disconnected, serve only to stifle the soul, so that it has no power over itself.

"On other occasions, I find myself unable to pray or to fix my thoughts with any distinctness upon God, or anything that is good, though I may be alone; but I have a feeling that I know the cause. It is the understanding and the imagination, I believe, which hurt me here; for it seems to me that I have a good will, disposed for all good; but the understanding is so lost, that it seems to be a raving lunatic, which nobody can restrain, and of which I am not mistress enough to keep it quiet for a minute.

"Sometimes I laugh at myself, and recognize my wretchedness; I watch my understanding, and leave it alone to see what it will do. Glory be to God, for a wonder it never runs on what is wrong, but only on indifferent things, considering what is going on here, or there, or elsewhere. I see then, more and more, the exceeding great mercy of our Lord to me, when he keeps this lunatic bound in the chains of perfect contemplation. I wonder what would happen if those people who think I am good knew of my extravagance. I am very sorry when I see my soul in such bad company.

"My soul, also, is subject occasionally to a certain foolishness—that is the right name to give it—when I seem to be doing neither good nor evil, but following in the wake of others, as they say, without pain or pleasure, indifferent to life and death, pleasure and pain. I seem to have no feeling. The soul seems to me like a little ass, which feeds and thrives,

because it accepts the food which is given it, and eats it without reflection. The soul in this state must be feeding on some great mercies of God, seeing that its miserable life is no burden to it, and that it bears it patiently, but it is conscious of no sensible movements or results, whereby it may ascertain the state it is in.

"On another occasion, I saw a great multitude of evil spirits around me, and, at the same time, a great light in which I was enveloped, which kept them from coming near me. I understood it to mean that God was watching over me, that they might not approach me so as to make me offend him. I knew the vision was real by what I saw occasionally in myself. The fact is, I know now how little power the evil spirits have, provided I am not out of the grace of God; I have scarcely any fear of them at all, for their strength is as nothing, if they do not find that the souls they assail give up the contest, and become cowards; it is in this case that they show their power." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxx-xxxi.)

THIRD SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

VOCAL PRAYER

PRELUDE.—There are souls who earn as great a reward by vocal prayer and obedience as they would have done by contemplation, and perhaps more.[1]

FIRST POINT

You must know that there is no need to keep one's lips closed in order to pray mentally.[2] If while I utter a prayer, I carefully consider its meaning and pay more attention to what I am saying to God than to the words themselves, this is both mental and vocal prayer. Should people affirm that you are praying to God, if while you recite the *Pater Noster*, or the *Ave Maria*, you are thinking of earthly things, then I have no more to say. But if you wish to behave with due respect while speaking to such a mighty Monarch, you should reflect on who he is you are addressing and what you yourself are, that you may show fitting reverence. For how can you accost him, and petition his Majesty the King, or know what ceremonies to use, unless you realize his rank and your own position? This is what regulates the respect to be paid, and you must learn it, unless you wish to be turned away as a bore and your requests ungranted.

Before prayer, endeavour to realize whose presence you are approaching and to whom you are about to speak, and keep in mind whom you are addressing. If our lives were a thousand times as long as they are, we should never fully understand how we ought to behave towards God before whom the very angels tremble, who *can* do all he *wills*, and with whom to wish is to accomplish. If a person neither considers to whom he is addressing himself, what he asks nor what he is who ventures to speak to God, although his lips

[1] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. iii.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxii.

may utter many words, I do not call it prayer.[1] Sometimes, indeed, one may pray devoutly without making all these considerations through having practised them at other times. The custom of speaking to God Almighty as freely as with a slave—caring nothing whether the words are suitable or not, but simply saying the first thing that comes to mind from being learnt by rote by frequent repetition—cannot be called prayer. God grant that no Christian may address him in this manner.

Second Point

For more than fourteen years I could not meditate without a book.[2] There are many people of this kind, and others cannot meditate even with the help of reading, but are obliged to recite vocal prayers, which to a certain extent arrest their attention.

I know a very old nun of most exemplary life (would to God my life were like hers !), very holy, very austere and a perfect religious, who has spent many hours, and even a number of years, in vocal prayer, but cannot make use of mental prayer; the utmost she can do is to pause a little, from time to time, during her *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters*, which is a very holy custom. Many people resemble her, if they are humble; let them not think they are more imperfect, or believe they will be any the worse for it in the end, for they will be quite as well off as those who enjoy many consolations. In one way such souls are safer, for we cannot tell whether spiritual delights come from God or from the devil: if they are not divine, they are very dangerous, for Satan tries to excite pride by their means; however, if they are sent by God there is nothing to fear, for they bring humility with them, as I fully explained in another book.

Other souls, receiving no spiritual consolations, are humble, for they doubt whether it is not through their own fault, and are most anxious to improve. When they see anyone

[1] *Interior Castle*, 1st Mansion, ch. i.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxii.

weeping, unless they do the same they think they must be much more backward than she is in God's service, although perhaps they are more advanced, for tears, though a good sign, do not always indicate perfection. Humility, mortification, detachment and other virtues are the safest: there is no cause for fear, nor need you doubt that you may become as perfect as the greatest contemplatives.

Third Point

It is important to understand that His Majesty does not lead all souls in the same way, and perhaps she who thinks herself the least of all may be the highest in his eyes.[1] I know that many people who practise vocal prayer are, without their knowing how, raised by God to a high state of contemplation. This is why I am most anxious you should say your prayers well.

I knew a nun who could only make vocal prayer, yet, while keeping to this, she enjoyed all the rest as well. Unless she used oral prayer, her thoughts wandered to an unbearable extent; yet I wish we all made such mental prayer as she did! She spent two or three hours in reciting certain *Pater Nosters* and a few other prayers in honour of our Lord's blood-sheddings. One day she came to me in great distress because she did not know how to make mental prayer, nor could she contemplate, but was only able to pray orally. I questioned her, and found that she enjoyed pure contemplation while saying the *Pater Noster*, and that God had occasionally raised her to perfect union with himself. This was evidenced by her conduct, for she lived so holy a life that I thank God for it, and I often envied her such vocal prayer.

Colloquy

How canst thou, Ruler of all creation as thou art, bear this want of reverence from men?[2] Thou hast been King, my God, from all eternity, for thine is no borrowed empire,

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xvii. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxii.

but thine own, and it will never end. Permit not that men should think it right for them to praise thee or to speak to thee with their lips alone. O thou our Monarch! King of Glory, Lord of Lords, Sovereign of all princes, Chief among the Saints! O Power, dominating over all else! Wisdom above all knowledge, having neither beginning nor end! limitless in all thy works, which are infinite and incomprehensible and a fathomless abyss of wonders! O Beauty containing all other beauty! Thou art Strength itself; thou art the Truth, O Lord, and the genuine Riches: do thou reign for ever, most merciful God! Would that I possessed the combined eloquence of all the human race, with wisdom to understand so far as the understanding can attain in this life, which is but utter ignorance, that I might succeed in telling at least a few of the many things that might be pondered over in order to obtain some feeble idea of the perfections of this our Lord and only Good.

Resolution

Before prayer, endeavour to realize whose presence you are approaching, and to whom you are about to speak, and keep in mind whom you are addressing.

READING

St Teresa's Vocal Prayer

"Our holy Mother," testified Mother Isabel of St Dominic, "always felt for God, our Lord, and the Saints the most profound respect, veneration and love, and worshipped them ardently and devoutly.

"She used to recite the divine Office with deep attention and reverence, and requested her nuns to do the same. She wished them to fulfil the duty of Psalmody, either recited or sung, in a grave and dignified manner." (*Process of Avila.*)

"Sometimes," said Mother Ann of Jesus, "she used to leave the divine Office with such a radiant, beautiful face

that we wondered at it. At other times she looked quite transfigured and as though dead. Occasionally her voice was changed entirely, especially one Christmas night, when, whilst singing at Matins the Gospel of St John, the tone of her voice had something celestial, although naturally it was not good." (*Process of Salamanca.*)

"She persuaded us by word and example," added her niece, Sister Teresa of Jesus, "to show attention and composure during the divine Office, requesting that the manner of singing should be very solemn, chiefly at these words of the *Gloria: Quoniam tu solus Sanctus.* She assisted at the divine Office in the choir as much as possible; and when obliged to recite it in private, I saw her often so absorbed and recollected that the mere sight inspired devotion. Whenever movement or noise was made in the cell she was in, nothing could distract her. During the time previous to her death, whatever might be her infirmities, and however urgent the business she had to attend to, she never omitted the recitation of her rosary. She always found time for that, even at midnight or at one o'clock, before giving her body any sleep." (*Process of Avila.*)

A fact related by St Teresa herself shows what power her vocal prayer had with God and how the devil feared it.

"I was once in an oratory," she says, "and having recited one Nocturn, was saying some very devotional prayer at the end of our Breviary, when Satan put himself between the book and me, to prevent my finishing the prayer. I made the sign of the cross and he went away. I then returned to my prayer, and he too came back. He did so, I believe, three times, and I was not able to finish the prayer until I had thrown holy water over him. I saw certain souls at that moment come out of Purgatory. They must have been near their deliverance, and I thought that Satan had been trying to hinder their release. I very rarely saw Satan assume a bodily form. I know of his presence through the vision in which no form is seen." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxi.)

FOURTH SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

INTERIOR TRIALS

PRELUDE.—On one occasion, I was exceedingly disquieted and troubled, and a great darkness covered my soul.[1] In this my distress our Lord began to speak to me: he bade me not to harass myself, but to learn, from the consideration of my misery, what it would be if he withdrew himself from me, and that we were never safe while living in the flesh. It was given me to understand how this fighting and struggling are profitable to us, because of the reward, and it seemed to me as if our Lord were sorry for us who live in the world.

FIRST POINT

Christian souls, I assure those of you whom God does not lead by the way of contemplation, that, both by observation and experience, I know that those following it do not bear a lighter cross than you: but, indeed, you would be aghast at the different kinds of trials God sends them.[2] I know a great deal of both vocations, and am well aware that the sufferings God inflicts upon contemplatives are of so unbearable a kind that, unless he sustained such souls by the means of divine consolations, they would find their pains insupportable. God guides those he loves by the way of afflictions; the dearer they are to him, the more severe are their trials. It is incredible that he should hate contemplatives, whom he himself praises and calls them friends, and absurd to imagine that he would admit self-indulgent and easy-going people into his friendship; I feel certain that God gives by far the heaviest crosses to his favourites. The road he chooses for them is so uneven and rugged as to make them fancy that they have lost their way and that they must turn back again and start afresh. Then His Majesty is obliged to give them some

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxix. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxvii.

refreshment—water would not be enough, it must be wine; inebriated with its draught from God, they become unconscious of their pain and enabled to endure it. Thus one rarely finds true contemplatives who are not valiant and resolved to suffer. If they are weak, the first thing our Lord does is to infuse courage into them, so that they may fear no trials. I believe that those who lead the active life, when they see that contemplatives occasionally receive consolation, imagine that their life consists of nothing else; yet perhaps you might not be able to bear such trials as theirs for a single day. Our Lord knows for what everybody is suited, and gives each what is best for her soul, for his own glory, and for the good of her neighbour.

Second Point

Let the contemplatives wage their own wars, which are no easy ones.[1] Though standard-bearers, like officers, do not actually fight, yet they expose themselves to great danger and must suffer in a way more than the rest of the men, because they carry the colours, which they must not relinquish even though they themselves are cut to pieces. In the same way contemplatives must uphold the standard of humility, and must bear all the blows aimed at them without making any reprisal, for their duty is to suffer as Christ did, bearing aloft the cross, and never letting it fall, whatever the danger may be, unless they would prove cowards in suffering. It is for this they are advanced to their high and honourable office. Do you suppose the position given them by the king is an easy one? For the sake of some slight distinction, they undertake to incur far more danger than the rest, and if they turn cowards, the battle will go against their side; let contemplatives, then, look to their conduct, for if the standard-bearer quits his colours, the day will be lost: in the same way, I believe that souls less advanced in religion are much injured by seeing those they hold as captains and friends of God act in a way ill-suiting their position. The common soldiers

[1] Ch. xxviii.

march as they can: if sometimes they withdraw from the thick of the fray, no one notices them, and they lose neither their honour nor their lives, but all eyes are on the standard-bearer, who cannot move without being seen. His duty is a noble one, and a great honour, and the king shows him special favour by his choice; but he has undertaken a heavy responsibility.

Third Point

Could I relate the interior torments met by such souls, the rest would seem trifling in comparison.[1]

Sometimes it seems to me the devils make a football of my soul, and the soul is unable to escape out of their hands.[2] It is impossible to describe the sufferings of the soul in this state. It goes about in quest of relief, and God suffers it to find none. The light of reason, in the freedom of its will, remains, but it is not clear; it seems to me as if its eyes were covered with a veil. Faith is then as dead and asleep, like all the other virtues; not lost, however, for the soul truly believes all that the Church holds; but its profession of the faith is hardly more than an outward profession of the matter. And, on the other hand, temptations seem to press it down, and make it dull, so that its knowledge of God becomes to it as that of something which it hears of far away. So tepid is its love that, when it hears God spoken of, it listens and believes that he is what he is, because the Church so teaches; but it recollects nothing of its own former experience.

Vocal prayer or solitude is only a greater affliction, because the interior suffering—whence it comes it knows not—is unendurable, and, as it seems to me, in some measure a counterpart of hell. So it is, as our Lord showed me in a vision; for the soul itself is then burning in the fire, knowing not who has kindled it, nor whence it comes, nor how to escape it, nor how to put it out.

Our Lord doubtless gives leave to the devil to tempt her. The evil spirit even tries to make her think God has rejected

[1] *Interior Castle*, vith Mansion, ch. i. [2] *Life*, ch. xx.

her. No comfort can be found in this tempest of trouble. In short, there is no other remedy except to wait for the mercy of God.

What can the poor soul do if such trials last for a long time? Prayer makes no difference as far as comforting the heart, in which no consolation can enter, nor can the mind even grasp the meaning of the words of vocal prayer; mental prayer is out of the question at such a time, since the faculties are unequal to it. Solitude harms the soul, yet society or conversation is a fresh torment. Strive as the sufferer may to hide it, she is so wearied and out of sorts with all around, that she cannot but manifest her condition.

How can the soul possibly tell what ails it? Its pains are indescribable; it is wrung with nameless anguish and spiritual suffering. Yet these trials cause her to take a far higher flight. As for myself, the recompense of such afflictions was great; for almost always, afterwards, his mercies descended upon me in great abundance.

Colloquy

O my Lord, they who love thee, oh, how little they have to suffer! oh, how gently, how tenderly, how sweetly thou, O my Lord, dealest with them![1] Oh, that no one had ever been occupied with any other love than thine! It seems as if thou didst subject those who love thee to a severe trial: but it is in order that they may learn, in the depths of that trial, the depths of thy love. O my God, oh, that I had understanding and learning and a new language, in order to magnify thy works according to the knowledge of them which my soul possesses! Everything fails me, O my Lord; but if thou wilt not abandon me, I will never fail thee. Let all the learned rise up against me, let the whole creation persecute me, let the evil spirits torment me, but do thou, O Lord, fail me not; for I know by experience now the blessedness of that deliverance which thou dost effect for those who trust only in thee.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxv.

Resolution

Never lose courage, but in all our afflictions trust in God and repeat:

When God doth the soul chastise
Heavy are its penalties,
Yet beneath the clouds that rise
Purer shine the sunny skies.[1]

READING

St Teresa consoled by our Lord in a Bitter Interior Trial

"It happened once that many persons in whom I had great confidence, and with good reason, had assembled together, five or six in number, I think, and all very great servants of God. It is true, my relations were with one of them only; but by his orders I made my state known to the others. They had many conferences together about my necessities; for they had a great affection for me, and were afraid I was under a delusion. I, too, was very much afraid whenever I was not occupied in prayer; but when I prayed, and our Lord bestowed his graces upon me, I was instantly reassured. My confessor told me they were all of opinion that I was deceived by Satan: that I must communicate less frequently, and contrive to distract myself in such a way as to be less alone.

"I was in great fear myself, as I have just said, and my disease of the heart contributed thereto, so that very often I did not dare to remain alone in my cell during the day. When I found so many maintain this, and myself unable to believe them, I had at once a most grievous scruple; for it seemed to me that I had very little humility, especially as they all led lives incomparably better than mine: they were also learned men. Why should I not believe them? I did all

[1] *Minor Works*

I could to believe them. I reflected on my wicked life, and therefore what they said to me must be true.

"In this distress, I quitted the church and entered an oratory. I had not been to Communion for many days, nor had I been alone, which was all my comfort. I had no one to speak to, for everyone was against me. Some, I thought, made a mock of me when I spoke to them of my prayer, as if I were a person under delusions of the imagination: others warned my confessor to be on his guard against me; and some said it was clear the whole was an operation of Satan. My confessor, though he agreed with them for the sake of trying me, as I understood afterwards, always comforted me: and he alone did so. He told me that, if I did not offend God, my prayer, even if it was the work of Satan, could do me no harm; that I should be delivered from it. He bade me pray much to God: he himself and all his penitents, and many others did so earnestly; I, too, with all my might, and as many as I knew to be servants of God, prayed that His Majesty would be pleased to lead me by another way. This lasted, I think, about two years; and this was the subject of my continual prayer to our Lord.

"But there was no comfort for me when I thought of the possibility that Satan could speak to me so often. Now that I was never alone for prayer, our Lord made me recollected even during conversation. He said what he pleased—I could not avoid it; and though it distressed me, I was forced to listen. I was by myself, having no one in whom I could find any comfort; unable to pray or read, like a person stunned by heavy trials, and by the dread that the evil one had deluded me; utterly disquieted and wearied, not knowing what would become of me, I have been occasionally—yea, very often—in distress, but never before in distress so great. I was in this state for four or five hours; there was no comfort for me, either from heaven or on earth—only our Lord left me to suffer, afraid of a thousand dangers.

"In this distress—for then I had never had a single vision—these thy words alone were enough to remove it, and give me perfect peace: 'Be not afraid, my daughter: it is I; and I will not abandon thee. Fear not.'

"It seems to me that, in the state I was then, many hours would have been necessary to calm me, and that no one could have done it. Yet I found myself, through these words alone, tranquil and strong, courageous and confident, at rest and enlightened; in a moment, my soul seemed changed, and I felt I could maintain against all the world that my prayer was the work of God." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxv.)

FIFTH SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

ON NOT EXCUSING ONESELF

PRELUDE.—I am overwhelmed with confusion at speaking on this subject, because there always seem to me good reasons for thinking it would be better to make some excuse for myself. This is often lawful—indeed, sometimes it would be wrong to omit it—yet I have not sufficient humility to do so when it is necessary.[1]

FIRST POINT

Indeed, it requires great humility to see oneself blamed without cause, and to be silent; we thus imitate our Lord, who freed us from our sins. Be most careful to act in this way, which does us great good, while I can see no use in our exculpating ourselves, unless, as I said, when we might cause offence or scandal by not telling the truth. Anyone who is more prudent than I am will easily understand this. I think it is a great gain to accustom oneself to practise this virtue, and to endeavour to obtain from God the sincere humility that must be the result. Whoever is really humble ought to wish sincerely to be despised, persecuted, and condemned for serious offences, without any just cause. If you seek to follow our Lord, in what better way can you do so? No bodily strength is needed here, nor the help of anyone, save of God.

I wish these great virtues, Christian souls, and above all you religious souls, to be both our study and our penance. You know that I restrain you from other severe and excessive austerities, which if performed imprudently might injure your health. Here there is nothing to fear; for however great the interior virtues may be, they do not weaken the body so that it cannot keep the rule of the religious life. These strengthen the soul, and, as I have often told you, by

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xv.

constantly conquering yourselves in little things, you may train yourselves to gain the victory in great matters. But—how well I have written this, and how badly I practise it!—indeed, I have never been tried thus in any important affair, for I never heard any ill spoken of me that did not fall far short of the truth, if not in that particular matter, yet often enough in similar things: only too often in other ways have I offended our Lord God, and I thought people showed me great kindness in not speaking of these. I always prefer that they should find fault with what I have not done.

Second Point

I desire each one to consider how much is gained by this habit of not excusing ourselves. I think it can never do any harm, while its chief advantage is that we thus, to a certain degree, imitate our Lord. I say "to a certain degree," for we are never wholly innocent when blamed, but are always guilty of many sins, for "the just man falls seven times a day,"[1] and "if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us";[2] therefore, though we may not be guilty of this particular fault, yet we are never altogether free from offence, as was the good Jesus.

How far we are from grasping this truth! We shall never reach the summit of perfection unless we come to understand what is the great reality, and what is of no account. Were there no other gain but the shame felt by your accuser at seeing that you permit yourself to be unjustly condemned, it would be very great, for to witness such an action sometimes benefits a soul more than listening to ten sermons. We must all strive to preach by our actions, since the Apostle and our own incapacity forbid us to do so by word of mouth. Do not imagine that either the good or the ill you do will be concealed, however strict your enclosure may be. And can you fancy that if you do not defend yourselves, no one else will take your part? See how our Lord

[1] *Septies cadet justus et resurget* (Prov. xxiv 16).
[2] *Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est* (1 Joan. i 8).

answered for the Magdalene in the house of the Pharisee, and also when her sister blamed her. He will not treat you with such rigour as he kept for himself. He did not permit even the thief to speak in his defence until he hung upon the cross. When there is need, His Majesty will find you an advocate: if not, it will be because you do not require one.

Third Point

I know that this is true, for it has been fully proved to me by experience. Yet I do not wish you to reckon on it: I would rather have you rejoice at being accused. Time will show you how your soul will benefit by this: you will gradually gain liberty of spirit, and will not care whether you are well or ill spoken of; you will feel as if the matter concerned someone else, or as if two people were holding a conversation in which you do not want to take part. It is the same here: we have grown so accustomed to returning no answer that it does not seem as if anyone had spoken to us. People who are unmortified and very sensitive may think this impossible. Though difficult at first, I know that this liberty of spirit, abnegation, and detachment may, by the grace of God, gradually be obtained.

Let the nun who believes that the sisters hold her the last of all, think herself the most fortunate, as indeed she is, if she bears it as she ought; and she will not fail to be honoured for it, both in this world and in the next: you may trust my words.

Of one thing I will speak: what will be the accidental glory and the joy of the blessed who have entered in it, when they see that, though they were late, yet they left nothing undone which it was possible for them to do for God, who kept nothing back they could give him, and who gave what they gave in every way they could, according to their strength and their measure—they who had more gave more.[1] How rich will he be who gave up all his riches for Christ! How honourable will he be who, for his sake, sought

[1] *Life* ch. xxvii.

no honours whatever, but rather took pleasure in seeing himself abased! How wise will he be who rejoiced when men counted him as mad!—they did so of Wisdom itself.

Colloquy

O my Lord, when I remember in how many ways thou didst suffer, who yet in no way didst deserve it, I know not what to say for myself, nor of what I am thinking when I shrink from suffering or defend myself from blame![1] Thou knowest, O my only Good, that if there is aught that is right in me, it comes from thy hands. Why shouldst thou not give me much, instead of little? If it is because I do not deserve it, neither have I deserved the graces thou hast already bestowed on me. Can it be that I should wish men to think well of a thing so vile as I am, when they said such evil things of thee, who art above every other good? Do not permit this; forbid it, O my God, nor let me wish that anything displeasing to thine eyes should be found in me, thy handmaid! See, O my Lord, I am blind and I care but little for the light! Enlighten me and make me sincerely desire that all men should hate me, since I have so often abandoned thee, who lovest me so faithfully.

Resolution

Never excuse yourself, except in grave matters.[2]

READING

St Teresa's Behaviour when accused, blamed and reprehended

"I observed in our holy Mother," Venerable Mother Ann of Jesus deposed, "that whatever the reprehensions of her superiors might be, she never defended herself, even when accused of faults she was well aware of not having committed. She would recommend us not to interfere in the matter, but

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xv. [2] *Maxims*.

to let her endure something in this case in reparation for her other failings of which God alone knew. She felt exceedingly joyful when undergoing a correction, declaring that sharp words and discourteous behaviour were to her as the most harmonious melodies." (*Process of Salamanca.*)

"I occasionally saw and heard the holy Mother corrected and blamed by her confessors," said Sister Isabel Baptist. "She bore it with the greatest humility without trouble or emotion. Often (as I heard myself) she would advise her daughters not to excuse themselves, even when without fault. She told them not to take her for their model, because she sometimes did so either through want of humility or because, as the head of the house or from other motives, she was obliged to give an account of her conduct." (*Process of Avila.*)

Let us listen to Father Ribera relating a trait of the life of St Teresa that refers to the last period of her existence. When returning from the foundation of Villanueva de la Gara, she with a few companions entered a village of the Province of la Mancha called La Deubla. They alighted near the church in order to hear Mass and communicate. The people present looked at her suspiciously, saying one to another that this woman appeared to be an adventuress and of a doubtful character, that it would be well to arrest her. On seeing her receive Holy Communion, they were scandalized and asked how she could be so bold as to communicate, adding that before she left the place, enquiries should be made about her.

"The holy Mother, filled with joy, did not utter a word. It was the patronal feast of the Church of the Annunciation; a crowd of people had assembled on account of the solemnity. But, in spite of the feast, such was their excitement that the service could not go on. The populace certainly would have become violent, had not Father Antony of Jesus, a Discalced Carmelite, well known in the place, arrived at this moment. Notwithstanding the reverence he inspired, and the assurances he gave, he could not thoroughly convince them. They persisted in saying they would send a trustworthy man to follow the Mother and her companions, and to inquire who she was and where the nuns were going.

"While this uproar lasted, the Saint's expression was serene, and she gave no reply, though almost all that can blacken the good name of a woman was flung at her. Within herself she remained perfectly quiet, the peace of her soul not being even ruffled. She asserted afterwards that, on this occasion, she had had nothing to offer to God. When one of her nuns said she could not bear such vile things said of her, she answered smiling: 'My daughter, no music is so sweet and delightful to my ears as this. In truth, those people were right in treating me as they did. They ought to have struck me with a stick: why be surprised at their speaking in this way?' In such cases she always blamed herself, defending and excusing those who had spoken ill of her." (*Life of Mother Teresa of Jesus,* book iv, ch. xvii.)

SIXTH SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

ATTACHMENT TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH AND CHURCH

PRELUDE.—In all things this nun[1] submits herself to the Catholic faith and the Roman Church.[2] She had always a great desire to see God honoured and his Church exalted. To that end were all her prayers directed, without making any for herself; for she thought that it mattered little if she had to suffer in Purgatory in exchange for the increase of the Church in the slightest degree.

FIRST POINT

Try to keep a good conscience; practise humility; despise all earthly things; firmly believe the teaching of our holy mother the Church—then you may feel sure you are on the right road.[3]

I look upon it as a most certain truth that the devil will never deceive, and that God will not suffer him to deceive, the soul that has no confidence whatever in itself; which is so strong in faith, and resolved to undergo a thousand deaths for any one article of the Creed; which in its love of the faith, infused by God once for all—a faith living and strong—always labours, seeking for further light on this side and on that, to mould itself on the teaching of the Church, as one already deeply grounded in the truth.[4] No imaginable revelations, not even if it saw the heavens open, could make that soul swerve in any degree from the doctrine of the Church. It seems to such soul as if it could crush the evil spirits in defence of the very least of the truths which the Church holds.

Love does not consist in great sweetness of devotion, but in a most fervent determination to strive to please God in all things, in avoiding, so far as possible, all that would offend

[1] The Saint speaks of herself.
[2] *Relations*, vi.
[3] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxi.
[4] *Life*, ch. xxv.

him, and in praying for the increase of the glory and honour of his Son and for the growth of the Catholic Church. These are the signs of love.[1]

Second Point

In matters concerning the faith, my courage seems to me very great.[2] I think I could go forth alone by myself against the Lutherans, and convince them of their errors. When I see the great needs of the Church, I look upon it as a mockery to be distressed about aught else.

Satan never was strong enough to tempt me in any way to doubt of God's goodness, or of any article of the faith; on the contrary, it seems to me that the more these truths were above nature, the more firmly I held them, and my devotion grew; when I thought of God's omnipotence, I accepted all his wonderful works, and, I say it again, I never had a doubt.[3]

As regards visions, as far as I can see and by experience understand, that which purports to come from God is received only in so far as it corresponds with the sacred writings; but if it varies therefrom ever so little, I am incomparably more convinced it comes from Satan than I am now convinced it comes from God, however deep that conviction may be.[4] In this case there is no need to ask for signs, nor from what spirit it proceeds, because this varying is so clear a sign of the devil's presence, that if all the world were to assure me that it came from God, I would not believe it.

It was said to me by an Inquisitor that there was nothing in all that happened to her that concerned his office, because everything that she saw and heard confirmed her the more in the Catholic faith, in which she always was, and is, firm, with most earnest desires for the honour of God and the good of souls, willing to suffer death many times for one of them.[5] Miserable as I am, I beg His Majesty to grant my prayers, for it is for his glory and the good of his Church, which is my only care.

[1] *Interior Castle*, IVth Mansion, ch. i. [2] *Relations*, i.
[3] *Life*, ch. xix. [4] Ch. xxv. [5] *Relations*, i.

Third Point

Satan contrived once that persons should hear from another that I had had a revelation in the matter [of the foundation of my first monastery]; and people came to me in great terror, saying that the times were dangerous, that something might be laid to my charge, and that I might be taken before the Inquisitors.[1] I heard this with pleasure, and it made me laugh, because I never was afraid of them; for I knew well enough that in matters of faith I would not break the least ceremony of the Church, that I would expose myself to die a thousand times rather than that anyone should see me against it or against any truth of Holy Writ. So I told them I was not afraid of that, for my soul must be in a very bad state if there was anything the matter with it of such a nature as to make me fear the Inquisition; I would go myself and give myself up, if I thought there was anything amiss; and if I should be denounced, our Lord would deliver me, and I should gain much.

I consider that everything ordained by the Church is very important. I know by frequent experience that there is nothing which puts the devils to flight like holy water. They run away before the sign of the cross also, but they return immediately; great, then, must be the power of holy water. As for me, I am conscious of a special and most distinct consolation whenever I take it. Indeed, I feel almost always a certain refreshing, which I cannot describe, together with an inward joy, which comforts my whole soul. This is no fancy, nor a thing which has occurred once only; for it has happened very often, and I have watched it very carefully. I may compare what I feel with that which happens to a person in great heat, and very thirsty, when drinking a cup of cold water—his whole being is refreshed. I have a joy in reflecting that the words of the Church are so mighty that they endow water with power, so that there shall be so great a difference between holy water and water that has never been blessed.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxiii

Colloquy

Do not permit, O Lord God, these evils to increase in Christendom, but illuminate its darkness.[1] Let, O my sovereign King, thy Majesty be appeased! Look not on our faults, but on thy most holy Son, who has redeemed us; reflect on his merits, on those of his glorious Mother, and on those of the many Saints and martyrs who have died for thee! But alas, O my God! who am I, who have dared to offer thee this petition in the name of all? What if my presumption should anger this supreme Judge, as would be only right and just? Look, O God, upon my desires, take pity on the many perishing souls, and have mercy on thy Church!

Resolution

Let us say often: At least I am a child of the Church!

READING

Revelations received by St Teresa while she was praying for Holy Church

Let us listen to her when recording how, while praying earnestly for the Church, God revealed to her several things to come:

"Once in prayer, with much recollection, sweetness, and repose, I saw myself, as it seemed to me, surrounded by angels, and was close unto God. I began to intercede with His Majesty on behalf of the Church. I was given to understand the great services which a particular Order would render in the latter days, and the courage with which its members would maintain the faith." (*Life written by herself*, ch. xl.)

In another place: "I have seen great things of the members of the Society of Jesus; I have occasionally seen them in heaven with white banners in their hands, and I have had other most wonderful visions, as I am saying, about them, and therefore have a great veneration for this Order; for

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. iii.

I have had a great deal to do with those who are of it, and I see that their lives are conformed to that which our Lord gave me to understand about them." (*Ibid.*, ch. xxxviii.)

A Discalced Carmelite Father, a contemporary of St Teresa, testified that the holy Mother told him confidentially that the following revelations concerned the Order of Carmel:

"I was praying before the most Holy Sacrament one day; I had a vision of a Saint, whose Order was in some degree fallen. In his hands he held a large book, which he opened, and then told me to read certain words, written in large and very legible letters; they were to this effect: 'In times to come this Order will flourish; it will have many martyrs.'

"On another occasion, when I was at Matins in choir, six or seven persons, who seemed to me to be of this Order, appeared and stood before me with swords in their hands. The meaning of that, as I think, is that they are to be defenders of the faith; for at another time, when I was in prayer, I fell into a trance, and stood in spirit on a wide plain, where many persons were fighting; and the members of this Order were fighting with great zeal. Their faces were beautiful, and as it were on fire. Many they laid low on the ground defeated, others they killed. It seemed to me to be a battle of heretics.

"I have seen this glorious Saint occasionally, and he has told me certain things, and thanked me for praying for his Order, and he has promised to pray for me to our Lord. I do not say which Orders these are—our Lord, if it so pleased him, could make them known—lest the others should be aggrieved. Let every Order, or each member of them by himself, labour, that by his means our Lord would so bless his own Order that it may serve him in the present grave necessities of his Church. Blessed are they whose lives are so spent." (*Ibid.*)

Mother Isabel of St Dominic has stated the following:

"In all that touched the Catholic faith, the more obscure and elevated the matter was, the more firmly our holy Mother attached herself to the same, saying—as I by myself heard—that the more sublime the mysteries were, the more

they manifested the power and wisdom of God. Consequently, the idea that God is all-powerful made them the more credible to her, in proportion as they were elevated and obscure. It was in virtue of a special gift from our Lord that, through an extraordinary knowledge of faith, she penetrated the ineffable mystery of the most Holy Trinity and other mysteries of our faith, which she expounded in a wonderful manner. This I know by my own intercourse with the holy Mother and by the witness of several grave and learned men, who, conversing with her and speaking of those mysteries, found it delightful to listen to her. Therefore they obliged her to treat at length on the same mysteries, in order to evidence more and more the supernatural intelligence she had of them.

"I heard her saying that she felt an immense joy at thinking she was a child of the Church. But, on the other hand, she endured great pain from seeing so many souls deprived of such happiness. I remarked also in her a profound veneration for things that have been blessed, such as palms, wax, etc. If she saw a leaf detached from a blessed palm on the floor, she would pick it up and kiss it respectfully. She had a special veneration for holy water, and often used it with much faith and veneration. She always took some with her, when she was travelling."

The holy Pontiff Pius X wrote :

"How can the tender love Teresa professed for the common Mother of all Christians be expressed? She considered it impossible to love God sincerely without taking a lively interest in the glory of Jesus Christ and the honour of the Church, his beloved Spouse. What respect and love that devoted daughter of the Church felt for all that concerned her Mother! How she emphasizes the power Jesus Christ vouchsafed to grant to Holy Church! How wonderful to see this woman enriched with the most precious gifts of the Holy Ghost, living in familiar intercourse with the divine Majesty, esteem so highly the sacred signs called 'Sacramentals,' the least ceremonies of the Church! Indeed, she would willingly have given her life a thousand times for any one of them." (*Letter written for the third centenary of St Teresa's beatification, 1914.*)

SEVENTH SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

ST MARY MAGDALENE

PRELUDE.—I had a very great devotion to the glorious Magdalene, and very frequently used to think of her conversion.[1] My soul imagined itself at the feet of our Lord and wept with Magdalene, as if it had really seen him in the house of the Pharisee.

FIRST POINT

The love of God, a *hidden* love indeed! As if a real love for God could possibly be hidden![2] Look at the Magdalene—in the first day she was sick with love. And how sure she was of it. Look at her in the house of the Pharisee, waiting on our Lord, washing his feet and wiping them with her hair.

Do you think it was a small mortification for a woman of rank, as she was, to go through the streets, perhaps by herself, for in her zeal she never thought of how she went?[3] Then she entered a house where she was a stranger, and had to bear the railing of the Pharisee, and many other trials. It was strange to see such a woman as she had been thus publicly change her life. With the wicked nation like the Jews, the sight of her love for our Lord, whom they hated so bitterly, was enough to make them cast in her face her former life, and taunt her with wanting to become a Saint. Doubtless she must have changed her rich robes and all the rest. Considering how men talk now of people far less well known than she was, what must have been said of her?

I assure you, she won the better part, after many crosses and mortifications. Must not the mere sight of men's hatred of her Master have been an intolerable trial?

[1] *Life*, ch. ix. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xl.
[3] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iv.

Second Point

I think the saluation of our Lord to his Apostles contains far deeper meaning than the words convey, as also his bidding the glorious Magdalene to "go in peace." Our Lord's words *act* within us, and in these cases they must have wrought their effect in souls already disposed to banish from within themselves all that is corporal and to retain only what is spiritual, in order to be joined in celestial union with the increated Spirit. Without doubt, if we empty ourselves of all that belongs to the creature, depriving ourselves of it for the love of God, that same Lord will fill us with himself.

See now how our Lord answered for the Magdalene in the house of the Pharisee, and also when her sister blamed her. Let not the soul who is called to the active life murmur at others who are absorbed in contemplation, for they know our Lord will defend them; as a rule, they themselves are silent, for the "better part" makes them oblivious of themselves and of all else.[1] His Majesty ever defends such souls and answers for them when they are persecuted and slandered, as he did for the Magdalene—if not in words, at least in deeds. At last, ah, at last, before they die, he repays them for all they have suffered!

Third Point

Think of what Magdalene endured afterwards at our Lord's death![2] I believe that she did not suffer martyrdom, because she was already a martyr by grief at witnessing the crucifixion. Consider also the severe penances performed by this glorious Saint who had always spent her life in luxury. Then what terrible pain his absence must have caused her during the long years afterwards!

Sometimes I consider, if a person like myself—whose love is so cold and whose true rest is so uncertain, for I have not deserved it by my works—frequently feels her banishment

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xvii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, VIIth Mansion, ch. iv.

so much, what the feelings of the Saints must have been: what the Magdalene must have suffered, in whom the fire of the love of God was so strong![1] Their life must have been a continual martyrdom. This I consider also.[2] The love of Magdalene was intense; she had received many mercies and realized the greatness and the majesty of God; she must have found it, therefore, very hard to bear the remembrance of her sins, which she must have regretted with a most tender sorrow. In fact, this pain is not lessened by reflecting that our Lord has already forgiven and forgotten our faults; our grief is rather increased at seeing such kindness and favours bestowed on one who deserves nothing but hell.

Colloquy

Weep, all faithful Christians, weep with your God, who shed tears of pity, not for Lazarus alone, but for those also who would never wish to rise to life, though he called them forth.[3] O my supreme Good! all the sins I have committed against thee were then before thine eyes. Prevent me, Lord, prevent all men from sinning again! Raise up souls dead in transgression; call them with such power, that they may receive the new life they ask not for, and come forth from the grave of their luxuries. Lazarus did not beg to be restored to life; thou didst recall him at the prayer of a woman who was a sinner. One far more guilty is now before thee, my God: show forth thy mercy! Wretch that I am, I pray for those who will not ask it for themselves. Thou knowest my anguish at seeing their indifference to the endless torments they will suffer unless they return to thee.

Resolution

There are souls whom our Lord instructs by degrees: to the Magdalene he gave strength in a moment.[4] He gives the same grace to others, according to the measure of their

[1] *Life*, ch. xxi.
[2] *Interior Castle*, vith Mansion, ch. vii
[3] *Exclamations*, x.
[4] *Life*, ch. xxii.

abandonment of themselves into his hands. Let us make a firm resolution to detach ourselves from all things, and esteem this grace according to reason.

READING

Our Lord chose St Teresa to replace St Mary Magdalene on Earth

"On the feast of the glorious St Mary Magdalene," St Teresa wrote, "our Lord again confirmed a grace I had received at Toledo, electing me, in the absence of a certain person, in her place." (*Relations*, xxiv.)

One of the confessors of St Teresa, Fr Diego de Yepes, gives the key of these enigmatical words as follows: "One day, on the feast of St Magdalene, as the Mother felt great envy of the deep love our Lord had borne to this Saint, the divine Master told her: 'Magdalene was my lover during my stay upon earth, and thou art mine now that I am in heaven.' For several years our Lord renewed this grace on the day of the Saint's feast." (*Life of Mother Teresa of Jesus*, bk. i, ch. xxix.)

Another confessor of St Teresa, Fray Diego de Yanguas, a Dominican, thus confirmed this statement in his deposition for the beatification: "I declare that I heard Mother Teresa of Jesus say that once, while in our Lord's presence during mental prayer, she told him that she very much envied St Magdalene, on account of her ardent love and her familiar intercourse with him. Our Lord replied: 'My daughter, she was my beloved whilst I lived on earth, and thou art my beloved now that I am in heaven.'" (*Process of Avila.*)

EIGHTH SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATION

ST JOSEPH

PRELUDE.—However numerous may be your patron Saints, always rank St Joseph first, for he has great power with God.[1]

FIRST POINT

If I were a person who had authority to write, it would be a pleasure to me to be diffusive in speaking most minutely of the graces which St Joseph has obtained for me and for others.[2] I took in my most painful infirmities this glorious Saint for my patron and lord, and recommended myself earnestly to him. He made me able to rise and walk, no longer a paralytic. I saw clearly that both from this my present trouble, and from others of greater importance, relating to my honour and the loss of my soul, this my father and lord delivered me, and rendered me greater services than I knew how to ask for. I cannot call to mind that I have ever asked him at any time for anything which he has not granted.

Once [at the time of the foundation of St Joseph at Avila] when I was in one of my difficulties, not knowing what to do, unable to pay the workmen, St Joseph, my true father and lord, appeared to me, and gave me to understand that money would not be wanting, and that I must hire the workmen.[3] So I did, though I was penniless ; and our Lord, in a way that filled those who heard of it with wonder, provided for me.

I am filled with amazement when I consider the great favours which God has given me through this blessed Saint, the dangers from which he has delivered me, both of body and of soul. To other Saints our Lord seems to have given grace to succour men in some special necessity ; but to this glorious Saint, I know by experience, to help us in all ; and our Lord would have us understand that as he was

[1] *Maxims.* [2] *Life*, ch. vi. [3] Ch. xxxiii.

himself subject to him upon earth—for St Joseph, having the title of father, and being his guardian, could command him —so now in heaven he performs all his petitions. I have asked others to recommend themselves to St Joseph, and they too know this by experience, and there are many now of late devout to him, having had experience of this truth.

Second Point

[To show how the devotion to St Joseph is pleasing to our Lady] I shall relate what follows: I was in the church of the monastery of the Order of the glorious St Dominic, thinking of the events of my wretched life, and of the many sins which in time past I had confessed in that house. I fell into so profound a trance, that I was, as it were, beside myself. I sat down, and it seemed as if I could neither see the elevation nor hear Mass. This afterwards caused a scruple to me. I thought, while I was in that state, that I saw myself clothed with a garment of excessive whiteness and splendour. At first I did not see who was putting it on me. Afterwards I saw our Lady on my right hand, and my father St Joseph on my left, clothing me with that garment; I was given to understand that I was then cleansed from my sins. When I had been thus clad—I was filled with the utmost delight and joy—our Lady seemed at once to take me by both hands. She said that I pleased her very much by being devout to the glorious St Joseph; that I might rely on my desires about the monastery being accomplished, and that our Lord and they too would be greatly honoured in it; they would watch over us, and because her Son had promised to be with us, and, as a proof of this, she would give me that jewel. She then seemed to throw around my neck a most splendid necklace of gold, from which hung a cross of great value. The stones and gold were so different from any in this world, that there is nothing wherewith to compare them. Their beauty is such as can be conceived by no imagination, and no understanding can find out the materials of the robe, nor picture to itself the splendours which our Lord revealed,

in comparison with which all the splendours of earth, so to say, are a daubing of soot. This beauty which I saw in our Lady was exceedingly grand, though I did not trace it in any particular feature, but rather in the whole form of her face. She was clothed in white, and her garments shone with excessive lustre, that was not dazzling, but soft. I did not see St Joseph so distinctly, though I saw clearly that he was there, as in the visions of which I spoke before, in which nothing is seen. Our Lady seemed to be very young.

When they had been with me for a while—I, too, in the greatest delight and joy, greater than I had ever had before, as I think, and with which I wished never to part—I saw them, so it seemed, to ascend up to heaven, attended by a great multitude of angels. (*Life written by herself*, ch. xxxiii.)

Third Point

I ask, for the love of God, that he who does not believe what I say about the devotion to St Joseph will make the trial for himself, when he will see by experience the great good that results from commending oneself to this glorious patriarch, and being devout to him.[1] Those who give themselves to prayer should in a special manner always have a devotion to St Joseph; for I know not how any man can think of the Queen of the angels, during the time that she suffered so much with the Infant Jesus, without giving thanks to St Joseph for the services he rendered them then. He who cannot find anyone to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious Saint for his master, and he will not wander out of the way.

Would that I could persuade all men to be devout to this glorious Saint; for I know by long experience what blessings he can obtain for us from God. I have never known anyone who was really devout to him, and who honoured him by particular services, who did not visibly grow more and more in virtue; for he helps in a special way those souls who commend themselves to him. It is now some years since

[1] Ch. vi.

I have always on his feast asked him for something, and I always have it. If the petition be in any way amiss, he directs it aright for my greater good.

I used to keep his feast with all the solemnity I could, but with more vanity than spirituality, seeking rather too much splendour and style, and yet with good intentions. I had this evil in me, that if our Lord gave me grace to do any good, that good became full of imperfections and of many faults; because, as for doing wrong, the indulgence of curiosity and vanity, I was very skilful and active therein. Our Lord forgive me! May it please him that I have not done amiss in venturing to speak about St Joseph; for, though I publicly profess my devotion to him, I have always failed in my service to him and imitation of him.

A Prayer in Honour of St Joseph which St Teresa used to recite

O God of all goodness and power, who in thy providence didst destine St Joseph, the just man and the son of David, to be the spouse of thy Mother, the Virgin Mary, and didst choose him for thy foster-father, we beseech thee by his prayers and merits to grant calm and peace to thy Church, and to us a glorious eternity, in which our souls may for ever be satiated by thine ineffable presence. Grant this, we beseech thee, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

READING

A Token of Protection granted to St Teresa by St Joseph

"During the last day of our journey from Toledo to Beas," Mother Ann of Jesus relates, "the drivers went so far in the midst of the Sierra Morena as not to know where they were going. Our Mother Teresa of Jesus told the eight nuns who accompanied her to ask God and our father St Joseph

to guide us. In fact, the drivers declared that we had lost our way and they could not get out of the labyrinth of rocks which surrounded us.

"The holy Mother had just made this recommendation to us, when from the bottom of a very deep hollow which could scarcely be seen from the high rocks on which we stood we heard a voice, which seemed to be that of an old man, shouting: 'Stop! Stop! You have gone astray. If you go further, you will fall over the precipice!'

"On hearing this, we stopped. The priests and gentlemen who accompanied us asked: 'Father, how can we escape from the danger we are in?' The voice replied that we must travel in a certain direction. All considered it a miracle that the carriages got through the pass. Some of the party, wondering at the fact, went to look for our charitable adviser. Mother Teresa said weeping and deeply touched: "I do not know why we let them go, for it was our Father St Joseph: they will not find him.'

"In fact, they came back saying they could see nothing, though they reached the very hollow from which the voice had come.

"From that moment we drove so fast and with such spirit that the drivers swore the mules were flying rather than running; a little more and they would jolt the cars to pieces. So quick were the mules that, whereas the inhabitants of the village we came from had been obliged to unyoke their carts in order to convey men and beasts to the other side of the River Guadalimar, we crossed without having alighted from our carriages or putting ourselves to any trouble. People who came from Beas to welcome us were amazed at our day's journey, which increased their devotion to our holy Mother and our Order." (*Deposition for the beatification of St Teresa, Process of Salamanca.*)

ARRANGEMENT OF THE MEDITATIONS FOR A RETREAT OF EIGHT DAYS

First Day.—1, God the supreme Truth; 2, Dignity of the human soul; 3, Mortal sin.

Second Day.—1, Death; 2, Hell; 3, Detachment from creatures.

Third Day.—1, Peace of soul; 2, Divine mercy and sorrow for sin; 3, Humility.

Fourth Day.—1, The Kingdom of Christ; 2, Courageous resolutions; 3, Mental prayer.

Fifth Day.—1, Aridity in prayer; 2, Vocal prayer; 3, Active work.

Sixth Day.—1, The agony of Jesus in the Garden; 2, Our Lord scourged and crowned with thorns; 3, Mortification.

Seventh Day.—1, The Resurrection; 2, Love of God; 3, Love for our neighbour.

Eighth Day.—1, Attachment to the Catholic faith and Church; 2, Union with God through conformity with his will; 3, The Way of the Cross.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE MEDITATIONS FOR A SECOND RETREAT OF EIGHT DAYS

First Day.—1, The soul dwelling of the Blessed Trinity; 2, Fear of God; 3, The Judgement.

Second Day.—1, Venial sin; 2, Contempt for honour; 3, Obedience.

Third Day.—1, The two standards; 2, Generous desires; 3, On not excusing oneself.

Fourth Day.—1, The divine Word incarnate for man's sake; 2, St Mary Magdalene; 3, The Samaritan woman.

Fifth Day.—1, Recollection; 2, Wandering thoughts; 3, Mental prayer the mainspring of all spiritual good.

Sixth Day.—1, Our Lord carrying the Cross and crucified; 2, Forgiveness of enemies; 3, Zeal for souls.

Seventh Day.—1, Love for the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2, Confidence in God; 3, Holy Communion.

Eighth Day.—1, St Joseph; 2, Spiritual trials; 3, Heaven.